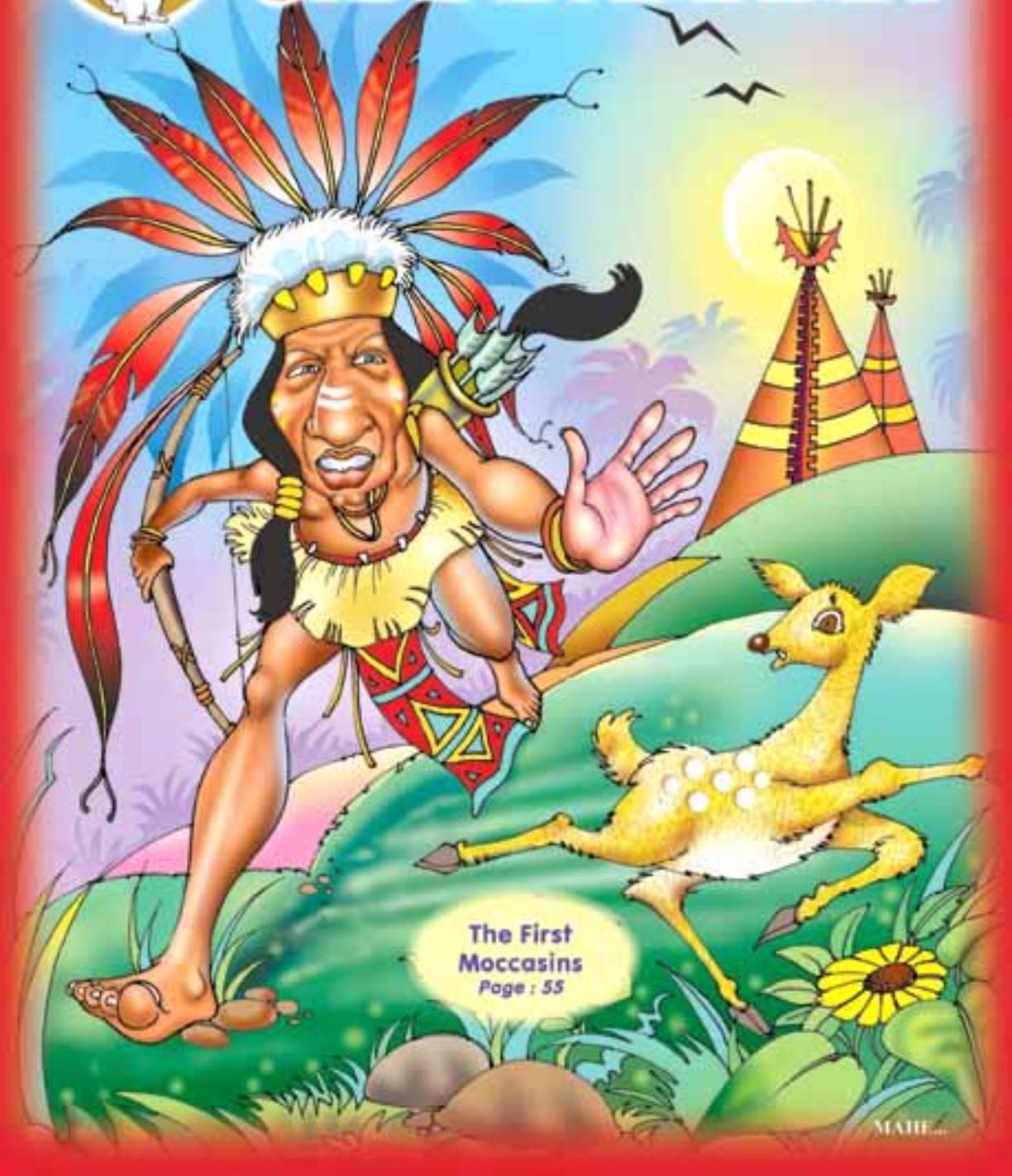


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Founded by
B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

On farmers and forecasts

Like a few other countries, India too has of late been launching weather satellites to help us make forecasts. These forecasts are passed on to the public through the radio, TV, and newspapers. However, farmers who depend on rain and sun to carry on their operations have not entirely forgotten the traditional forecasting methods.

According to a recent news report, a farmer in a Saurashtra village predicted rain during a specified fortnight, and he proved correct, much to the surprise of a scientist of the Gujarat Agricultural University to whom he had written a few days earlier. For him, it was not the first instance of farmers making use of traditional methods of rain forecasting.

Encouraged by such revelations of indigenous technical knowledge, this scientist has formed an organisation with nearly 400 farmers—a few of them from outside Gujarat as well—to provide a regular feedback to the researches being conducted by the University.

This brings to our mind that India had scientists like Varahamihira (8th century) and Bhadli (12th century) who had studied biological indicators to make forecasts. Varahamihira's *Brihad Samhita*, to quote one instance, states that the bright yellow *amaltas* would blossom in abundance some 45 days before the onset of monsoon. Bhadli based many of his conclusions on the changing colours of the sky.

March 23 is World Meteorology Day. It is just an appropriate occasion to recall what India was once capable of and what its recent achievements are on the land, water, and the sky.

Editor : VISWAM
Editorial Advisors : RUSKIN BOND, MANOJ DAS
Consultant Editor : K. RAMAKRISHNAN

Enter the Heroes of India Quiz and win fabulous prizes

Heroes of India - 6

Indian history is full of wars. Can you recognise the heroes associated with some of these wars?

**Three
all correct entries
will receive bicycles
as awards.***

1 This Maratha king fought the Mughals bravely. He was arrested treacherously by Aurangzeb. But he escaped. Who is he?

2 He was the first Indian to take over the post of Chief of Army Staff and Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army on January 15, 1949. Who is he?

3 This Chola king defeated King Mahipala of Bengal. He brought water from River Ganges to his capital, Gangaikondacholapuram. Do you know who he is?

4 He was the first Field Marshal of the Indian Army. Can you name him?

5 He won the First Battle of Mysore. His son is as illustrious as he is. Who is this hero?



Fill in the blanks next to each question legibly. Which of these five is your favourite hero and why? Write 10 words on **My favourite hero is**

.....

.....

Name of participant:.....

.....Age:.....Class:.....

Address:.....

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.....Pin:.....Ph:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Signature of parent:.....

Please tear off the page and mail it to

Heroes of India Quiz-6

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No.82, Defence Officers Colony

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On/before **April 5, 2002**

Instructions

1. The contest is open to children in the age group 8-14 years.
2. *Three winners will be selected for this contest from entries in all the language editions. **Winners will receive bicycles of appropriate size.** If there are more than one all correct entries, winners will be selected on the basis of the best description of **My favourite hero**.
3. The judges' decision will be final.
4. No correspondence will be entertained in this regard.
5. The winners will be intimated by post.

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C M Y K

Many Horizons

Sea-shells. They are among my earliest memories. I was five years old walking bare-foot along the golden sands of the beach in Kathiawar, collecting shells and cowries and taking them home to fill an old trunk. Some of these shells have remained with me through the years. I still have one which I place against my ear to listen to the distant music of the Arabian Sea.

A jack fruit tree. It stood outside my grandfather's house in Dehra Dun; it was easy to climb and generous with its shade, and on its trunk was a large hole where I could hide my marbles, sweets, books that were taboo for me, and other treasures.

I have always liked the smell of certain leaves, perhaps even more than the fragrance of flowers. Crushed geranium and chrysanthemum leaves, mint and myrtle, lime and neem trees after the rain, and the leaves of ginger, marigold, and nasturtiums.

Of course, there were other smells which, as a boy, I especially liked –



- Ruskin Bond

the smells of *pillau* and *kofta* curry, hot *jalebis*, roast chicken, and fried prawns. But these are smells loved by most gourmets (and most boys), and are as not as personal as the smell of leaves and grass.

I have always liked trains and railway stations. I like eating at railway stations – hot grams, peanuts, puris, and oranges.

As a boy, I travelled to Shimla on a little train that crawled round and through the mountains. In March, the flowers on the rhododendron trees provided splashes of red against the dark greens of the hills. Sometimes there would be snow on the ground to add to the contrast.

What else do I love and remember of the hills? Smells again. The smells of fallen pine needles, cow dung smoke, spring rain, bruised grass, the pure cold water of mountain streams, and the depth and blueness of the sky.

In the hills I have loved forests. In the plains, I have loved single trees. A lone tree on a wide, flat plain—even

if it is a thin, crooked, nondescript tree—gains beauty and nobility from its isolation, from the precarious nature of its existence. Of course, I have had my favourites among trees. The banyan, with its great branches spreading to form roots and intricate passage ways. The peepul with its beautiful heart-shaped leaves catching the breeze and fluttering even on the stillest of days. It is always cool under a peepul. The jacaranda and *gulmohur*, bursting into blossom with the coming of summer. The cherries, peaches, and apricots flowering in the hills—the tall, handsome chestnuts and the whispering deodars.

Deodars have often inspired me to poetry. One day I wrote:

*Trees of god, we call them;
Planted there when the world
Was young,
The first trees
Their fingers pointing to the stars,
Older than the cedars of Lebanon.*

Several of these trees were cut down recently and I was furious:

*They cut them down last
Spring
With quick and efficient tools,
The sap was rising still.
The trees bled, slaughtered
To make furniture for tools.*

And which flower is most redolent of India? Not for me the lotus or the water lily, but the simple mari-

gold—fresh, golden, drew-drenched, kissed by the morning sun.

The smell of the sea...I lived with it for over a year in the Channel Islands. I liked the sea mist and liked the fierce gales that swept across the islands in the winter.

Later, there were the fogs of London; I did not like them, but they made me think of Dickens, and I walked to Wapping and the East India Dock Road and watched the barges on the



Thames. I had my favourite pub and my favourite fish-and-chips shop. There were always children flying kites from Primrose Hill or sailing boats in the ponds of Hampstead Heath.

Once we visited the gardens at Kew and in a hot house, moist and smelling of the tropics, I remembered the East and some of the simple things I had known—a field of wheat, a stack of sugarcane, a cow at rest, and a boy sleeping in the shade of a long red-fingered pointsettia... and I knew I would go home to India.

If you are planning to go on a safari where you can sight nearly a hundred tigers in one area, then the Similipal National Park is the place to go! One of the first national parks to come under Project Tiger, Similipal, in the Mayurbhanj district of Orissa, is all of 2,750 sq. km – a big treat for the eyes!

Similipal's vast area has a mixed landscape and a wide range of foliage. As many as 12 rivers flow through the Park! The park is so vast that even the climate varies from one location to another, within its area. All these features make Similipal an ideal breeding ground for many varieties of flora and fauna.

Wildlife enthusiasts will be thrilled to see a wide variety of animals like leopards, elephants, mugger crocodiles, and numerous reptiles, which abound here. How about birdwatchers? Well, Similipal presents you with around 230 species of birds! So, take out those binoculars and get going!

Nature-lovers need not feel left out, either. The scenic beauty of the mountains, valleys and waterfalls in the Park will take one's breath away. The waterfall at Barehipani and Joranda along with Chahala and Nawana inside are a few places where accommodation is available in Similipal National Park.

A QUIZ FOR YOU!

For children up to 14 years

CONTEST - VII

1. How many Tiger Reserves are there in India?
2. The Similipal National Park has a crocodile-breeding centre. Where is it situated?
3. Which sanctuary in Orissa is situated where the River Mahanadi cuts through the Eastern Ghats?

Write your answers legibly in the blank space provided, fill in the coupon below and send the entry to

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A show of utter contempt

❖ *What is the meaning of 'turn up one's nose at'? Where does one use the expression? asks **Kavita Bose** of Siliguri.*

When you turn up your nose at someone, you are only showing your contempt for a person or his action. Imagine that someone—probably your schoolmate—approaches you and asks you to lend her one of your notebooks, and you do not wish to oblige her, and bluntly say ‘no, sorry’, it can be described as turning up your nose at that friend. You really feel that she deserves contempt.

❖ *What is meant by the idiom 'to overplay one's hand'? The query came from reader **Jyotiranjan Biswal** of Durgapur.*

If anyone overplays his hand, it only means he is behaving as though he is in a stronger position than he actually is. The expression must have come from card games, say, Bridge, in which a player tries to give the impression that his deck is strong, with a view to gaining more than what his cards can really get him.

❖ *Reader **Vidyadharan** of Hanamkonda asks: “When does one throw in the towel?”*

When you throw in the towel, you concede defeat as you feel you have practically no chance of winning. In boxing, only the referee or the manager of a fighter can stop a fight. If the manager finds that his man has no chance of winning, he can end the fight by throwing the boxer's towel into the ring.

❖ *What is a child's play? asks reader **Dharmarajan** of Coimbatore.*

The expression does not take a definite or indefinite article. When someone says “it is child's play”, he/she merely means the task is easily done.



THE COLOURS ARE NEAR US

“**A**nother boring meeting!” muttered Tara. Suraj and Varsha weren’t amused. “This detective club is really useless,” grumbled Tara. “What’s the point in looking for clues and suspects when there’s no mystery to be solved?”

Varsha knew that this made sense. At the same time they wanted to be detectives. Aren’t detectives supposed to look for clues and suspects?

“Hmm! Maybe we should do something new,” she said, thinking aloud.

“Like what?” asked Suraj. They were sitting on the gnarled roots of a huge *peepal* tree.

“I don’t know for sure,” replied Varsha.

“Well, it’s kind of silly to be suspicious of every new face we see,” said Tara. “Remember how we attacked that man with the flowing white beard last month?”

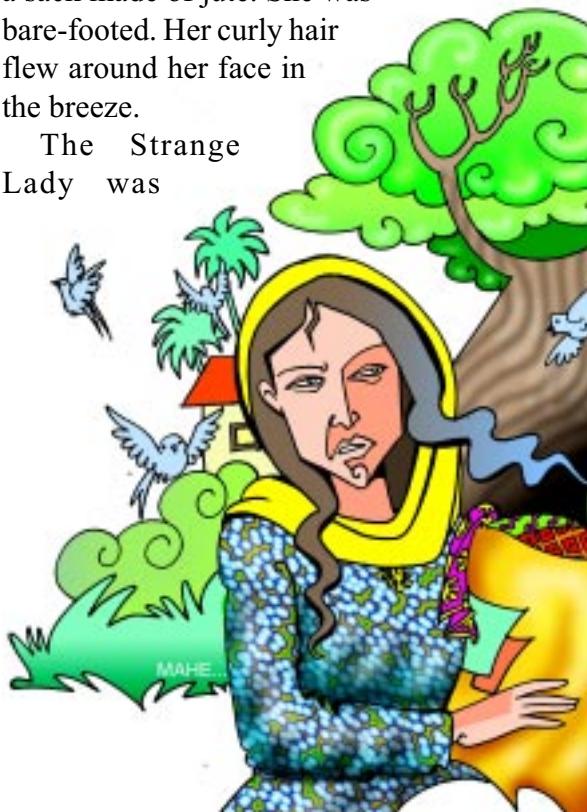
“All because I thought it might have been a disguise!” chuckled Suraj.

“But we can’t suspect everyone who looks strange, can we?” asked

Tara, reasonably. There was no reply. She looked up to where her friends were staring. A strange-looking lady had appeared from behind the trees.

They were in an isolated part of the Delhi Ridge. It was late afternoon. Not too many people passed by at that hour. The Strange Lady wore a long, faded *ghagra*. And she was carrying a sack made of jute. She was bare-footed. Her curly hair flew around her face in the breeze.

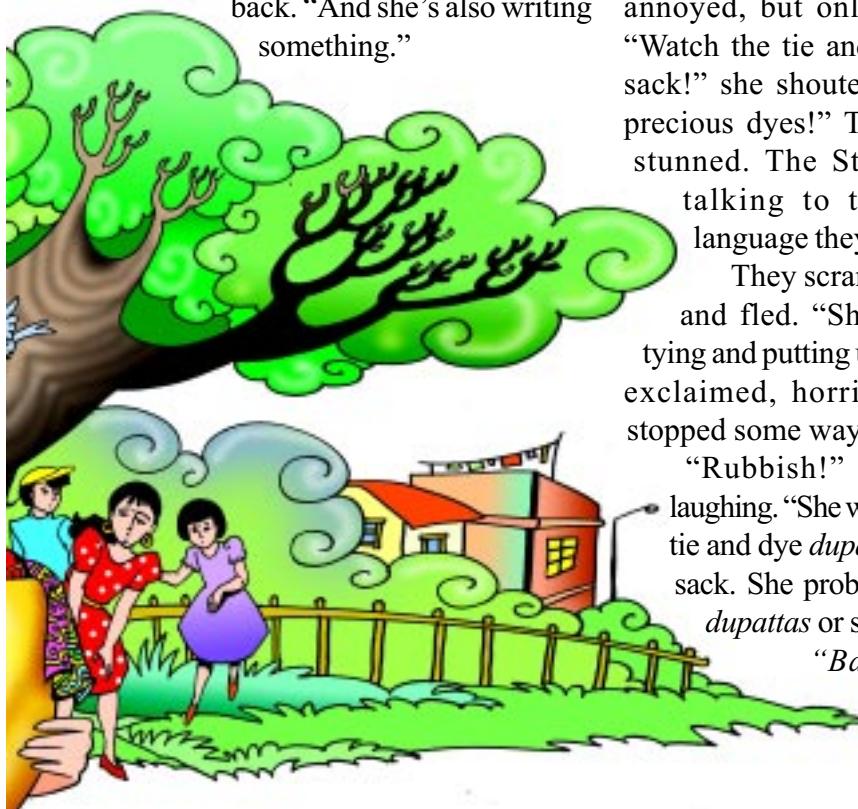
The Strange Lady was



humming to herself. Unfamiliar words, and an unfamiliar tune. A few birds hopped around her and soon set up a chorus. They sang in tune with her, and then flew away.

The Strange Lady pulled something out of the sack. The children watched curiously. It was a book. Then, she pulled out some old bottles. Varsha recognised a recycled tomato sauce bottle, a jam jar, and a pickle bottle. They were all full of coloured liquids. She then pulled out a large feather from the sack. "She's sketching something," whispered Varsha.

"Birds, I think," Tara whispered back. "And she's also writing something."



Suraj looked a little frightened by the strange things that she was doing. "Come on, let's go," he urged. Coils of multi-coloured cloth popped out of the sack that lay on the ground. "Let's make a dash for the road," Suraj pleaded.

He started running. The other two followed. The sack was in his way and Suraj's feet got entangled in it. He tripped and fell. Varsha and Tara bumped into him, lost their balance and fell.

The Strange Lady's bottles were knocked over. Rivulets of green and yellow and pink and blue trickled towards the sack. She looked annoyed, but only for a moment. "Watch the tie and dye stuff in the sack!" she shouted. "There go my precious dyes!" The children were stunned. The Strange Lady was talking to them! And in a language they knew!

They scrambled to their feet and fled. "She's talking about tying and putting us in a sack!" Suraj exclaimed, horrified, when they stopped some way off.

"Rubbish!" Tara burst out laughing. "She was talking about the tie and dye *dupattas* that are in her sack. She probably sells *bandhani dupattas* or something."

*"Bandhani dupattas!"
I've heard that*

March 2002



they are very colourful. Let's go back. I want to see them!" said Varsha. She changed track and headed straight back to the Strange Lady. Tara followed, hesitantly.

"You go, I'll wait here for you!" said Suraj in a shaky voice. He just was not convinced.

"Aunty, we're sorry we made a mess of your things!" Varsha was very direct and she looked the Strange Lady in the eye. And suddenly the Strange Lady stopped looking quite so strange.

"That's okay!" she smiled, looking up at them as she picked the feather

and bottles that lay strewn all around.

"May we please see your tie and dye dupattas?" asked Tara.

"Of course!" she replied and began pulling out the most vibrantly coloured material they had ever seen.

"How beautiful!" chorused Tara and Varsha.

"Where do you get such beautiful colours?" asked

Varsha.

"These dyes are all made out of vegetables," the lady explained. "I make them myself. You may make them, too!"

"Oh, is that so?" cried Tara, all excited. "Will you teach us?"

"Sure!" the lady smiled "I'll..." But she was interrupted. Tara and Varsha recognised that loud, frightened yelp. It was Suraj. They quickly turned around.

Three tall boys had surrounded Suraj and they seemed to be grappling with him. They were laughing but Suraj was certainly not amused!

Dyes from nature

In India, natural dyes derived from the essence of flowers, vegetables, and seeds have for years been used for colouring fabric and food. Instead of chemical dyes in use during Holi, we can go for water mixed with turmeric to get a shade of yellow, boiled beetroot or onion skins for a reddish tint, water scented with rose petals, and spinach for a green tint. We could also experiment with many other leaves and dried petals. Do spread the word, not chemicals, this Holi!

“Oh no! It’s the Gang!” cried Varsha.

“Gang?” asked the Strange Lady. “Can you explain that as we run to stop that, whatever it is?”

The three of them started running and Varsha explained, between gasping breaths, that the Gang was a group of boys in their colony who pelted everyone with balloons of water and coloured powder during Holi. They were a terror in the locality. Holi was only tomorrow, but they were active already!

The children liked the festival. It was fun. But the water balloons and chemical colours that strangers threw at people on the roads weren’t fun at all.

They were there at last. The Gang was trampling over the beautiful flowers in the park. The colourful beds of salvia, nasturtium, phlox, and

gulab flowers were crushed beneath the Gang’s spiked shoes.

“Stop!” commanded the Strange Lady, as she wrenched a balloon of coloured water from the hands of one of the gang members. “Horrible chemical colours! Do you know how harmful these are for your skin? Foolish boys!”

The Gang shrank back in fear. They were the kind of people who were terrified of new people or new ideas.

“Do you know what the festival of colours is about?” the Strange Lady asked, in her musical voice, and continued: “It is the celebration of the coming of spring. Look at the delightful hues of the flowers and birds around us. We celebrate the colours of nature and splash water on friends. But attacking people when you’re not expected to! That doesn’t look like any celebration to me! And look at the chemicals you’re using. Haven’t you heard of safe and good vegetable dyes available for use as Holi colours?”

The Gang walked away, feeling foolish and a bit puzzled. The next week, Tara, Varsha and Suraj began learning how to make eco-friendly vegetable dyes. *-V. Shruti Devi*

Courtesy: The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and Kalpavriksh.

March 2002



Chasing Two Rabbits

Rahul was a very smart boy and a quick learner. He took a lively interest in many things and loved to have his finger in every pie in sight. When something caught his attention, he would immediately want to learn it. Now this is a good trait, to be sure. But Rahul always made a big mistake and it was this: just as he would be learning an art or skill, he would leave it halfway for another that would have caught his fancy. Everything was a fad for him, a fleeting fancy by then. And so, although he began learning many crafts and arts, he never learnt anything completely.

For example, one day, he saw his uncle, who was a carpenter, carving out a beautiful door for the big *babu's puja* room. He decided that he, too, must learn to carve in wood. His uncle gladly agreed to teach him. Rahul decided to make a small wooden stool to place his school books on.

He was doing it well, but just as he had fixed the third leg on to the table, Rahul's eyes caught sight of Priya *chachi* next door, who was dyeing a sari into a beautiful pink. The colour



attracted him and he dropped the fourth leg of the table. 'I must learn to dye cloth!' he thought. And the stool was forgotten! And if you want to know, he did not learn the art of dyeing too well, either. Something else came his way and...you can guess the rest!

One day, as Rahul was returning from school, he saw a grand procession. Drums, pipes, dancing men, showers of flower petals, and lots of firecrackers! He stopped to see it pass. At the head was the village *pahalwan*, Guruji Somchand, wearing a bright garland, and he was followed by his disciples and fans. His followers were shouting "*Guruji ki jai!*"

"What's all this?" Rahul asked one

of the men following Guruji.

“Guruji is great. He has just won the State Wrestling Championship. It’s a great honour to our village. He’ll now go for the national championship, and he’ll certainly win that, too!”

Rahul, of course, was very impressed. He spent the whole evening thinking of Guruji’s feat. However, his poor mother sighed, when she saw him walking about in a daze.

“This boy is dreaming of something else again! Now he’ll give up learning music! And he was shaping up into such a good singer,’ she rued. She was right.

“Ma,” began Rahul at dinner, “I want to be a wrestler like Guruji!”

His mother was horrified. “Wrestler! No!” she cried. “Good heavens! You’ll get hurt, you may lose some teeth, you may break some bones. No, no, Rahul! I won’t let you do that!” His father was against it, too. But they simply could not dissuade him.

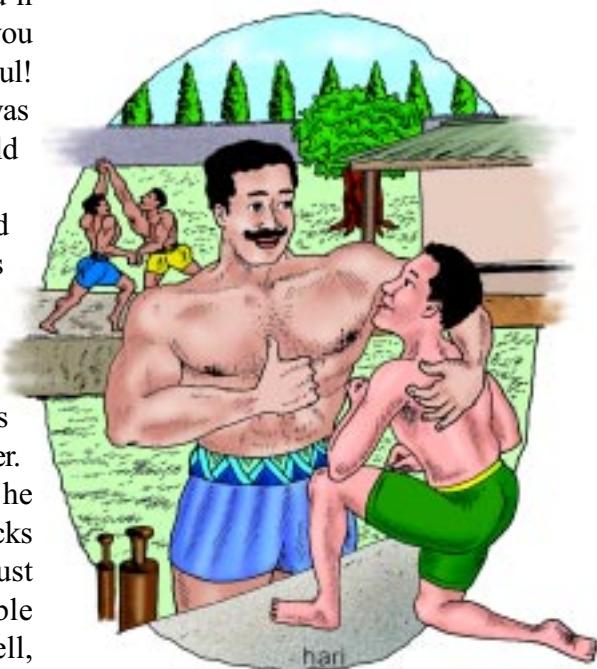
The next day, Rahul presented himself at the *akhara*. Guruji was amused to see the puny boy, but welcomed him heartily anyway. “We’ll make a champion of even you!” he exclaimed loudly, and all his disciples dutifully roared with laughter. Rahul was a little frightened, but he began bravely. In spite of a few knocks and black eyes now and then, in just two months he made considerable progress. “You’re coming up well,

chottu mull!” remarked Guruji affectionately one day.

Rahul was thrilled. To be complimented by Guruji was no small feat and he felt proud and happy as he walked back home from the *akhara*.

Hey, what was this? Just two houses away from his was a house that had been vacant for the last six months. But now someone was going to occupy it. Two men were putting up a big bright board outside the house. On the board was a big picture of a man in a karate pose and a message: **LEARN KARATE HERE**. That’s it. Rahul was fascinated: ‘I must learn karate!’ he thought.

The next day, when he reached the *akhara*, he told Guruji all about it.



“Guruji,” he said, nervously twiddling his toes in the sand, “I....I ..want to learn karate. I feel I’ll be a good karatekar. But I won’t give up wrestling. I’ll practise all that you’ve taught me! Please tell me what I should do!”

Guruji looked at him silently for a few moments. “Go home now,” he said abruptly. “And come back tomorrow morning. I need time to think!” Rahul went away.

Guruji had a solution for him the next day. He brought out two rabbits from a hatch. “*Chottu mull!*” he said. “I shall release these two rabbits now. You must chase them and bring them back to me!”

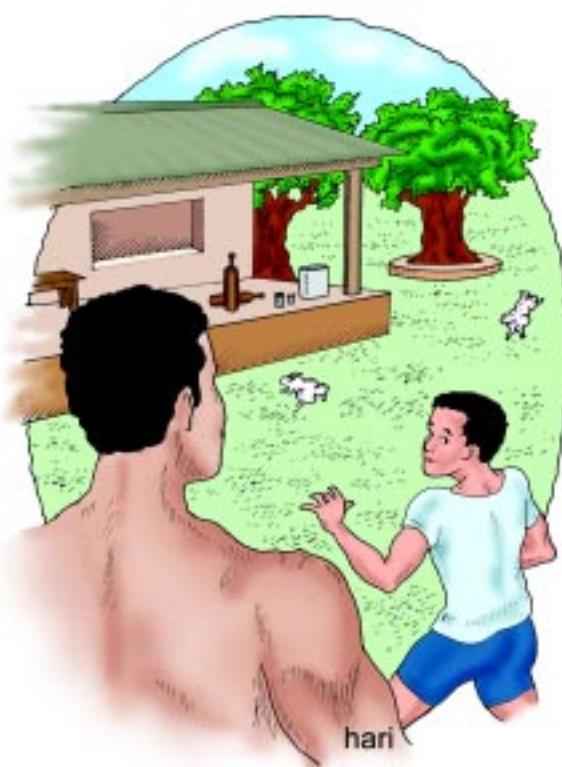
Rahul was surprised, but he

accepted Guruji’s task and got ready to chase the rabbits. Guruji released the two rabbits. Each scuttled away in different directions. Rahul, who was ready for the chase, stood and gaped. Now which rabbit was he to chase? How could he chase and bring back both rabbits?

Guruji saw his blank look and came up to him kindly. He put his big arm around the young boy’s shoulder. “*Chottu mull!*” he said kindly. “Learning an art is like chasing a rabbit. You cannot chase more than one at a time. You’ve been a good student of wrestling. If you continue, you may shine as a wrestler. But if you leave midway, you’ll gain nothing.”

He smiled at the young boy. “By all means, learn karate. But only after you’ve mastered wrestling. Not now. You could not chase two rabbits at the same time, could you? You don’t know yet how you will fare in karate. If you don’t fare well at it and also forget your wrestling skills, you’ll have merely wasted time. I advise you to concentrate on wrestling. But you’re free to take your decision. If you think you’ll fare well in karate, please go ahead!”

Rahul did not hesitate. He fell at Guruji’s feet. No more did he flit from one art to the other. We are told that he is now an excellent wrestler. Don’t be surprised if you read about him in the newspapers!



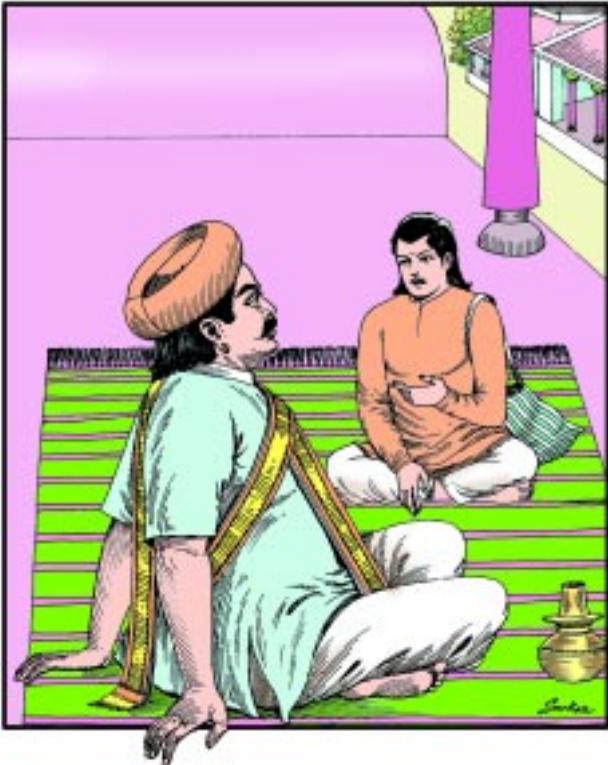
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New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala

Selfishness!

Once again, King Vikram walked up to the tree where the corpse was hanging. He took it down, put it on his shoulders, and silently began the trudge back to the cremation ground. The Vetala that possessed the corpse said: " O King! I've warned you again and again that the cremation ground is full of spirits, ghouls, and vampires. They might harm you or cast a spell on you. Surely, you have understood by now that I'm your well-wisher! Why, then, don't you listen to my words of advice? After you go through so much trouble, you'll one day realise that the



person who has sent you on this errand is only serving himself. He's merely using you as an instrument to promote his own interests. You'll be dejected and disappointed when you realise this. So, withdraw yourself while you still have time. I shall tell you the story of a poet named Spandandas. It may serve to illustrate what I say."

Spandandas was a talented young poet of Durgapur. The villagers loved to listen to his poetry. Spandandas built a big house for himself, tilled his lands, and reaped a rich harvest. He was a satisfied young man. He decided to get married and settle down to the comfortable life of a householder.

His dreams of a happy life were, however, thwarted. Durgapur and the

surrounding villages were suddenly struck by drought. For the past two years, the region had not been receiving much rainfall and a famine was imminent. Food scarcity was taking a heavy toll of lives. The rich, of course, were not much affected. When the poor could not bear the famine any longer, some of them thought of leaving Durgapur in search of better places to live.

Jagan, a young man, decided to scout for locations for the villagers to shift to. After a lot of wandering, he returned to Durgapur and approached the villagers. "Must we remain in this village any longer? I've found a village called Fatehpur some distance from here. Let's migrate. We shall surely get some work there to fend for ourselves."

The elders among the villagers listened to him with patience, but were not in favour of the proposal. They said: "You may be right. Fatehpur may be a better place to live in. But we don't want to leave our village. We really cannot live without listening to the beautiful poetry of Spandandas. If you can persuade him to go along with us, we don't really mind going away from here."

Jagan took his proposal to Spandandas. "You, too, must leave the village and come away to Fatehpur. The people won't move just because they say they cannot live without you. Now

everything depends on you.”

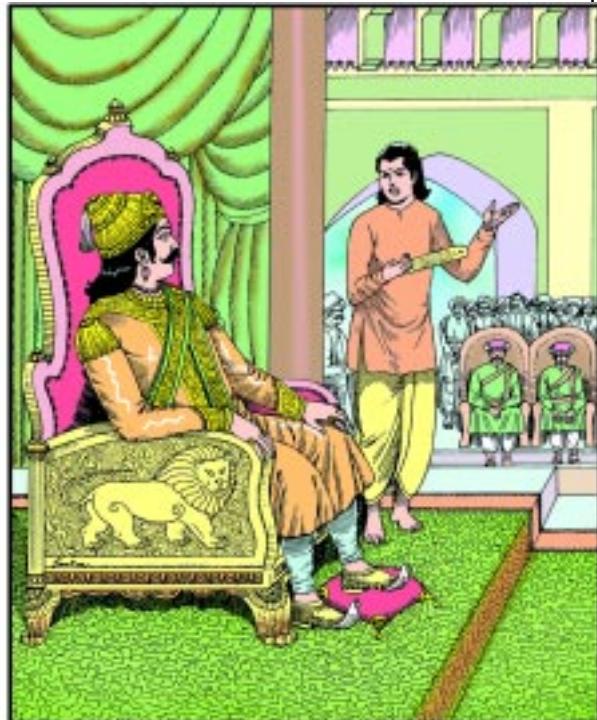
Spandandas was shocked to hear this. He went up to the village chief, Raja Choudhry. “I hear the villagers are planning to leave the village. But you can’t let this happen. Please do something to stop them. What’ll happen to our village if our dear brothers and sisters go away?”

Raja Choudhry agreed that the situation was bad. But he said he was quite helpless. “I’ve sent word to our king about the dire situation our village is facing. But nothing has come of it. I can’t stop anyone from leaving the village. Let all those who wish to go do so and let the others remain!”

But Spandandas would not hear of such a thing. He went back to Jagan with a suggestion. “You say there are two hundred families who wish to leave the village. Please ask them not to go. I shall feed and take care of all of them.”

Jagan was moved by his earnestness. “It’s very kind and noble of you to offer to take care of us,” he said. “But for how long can you do that?”

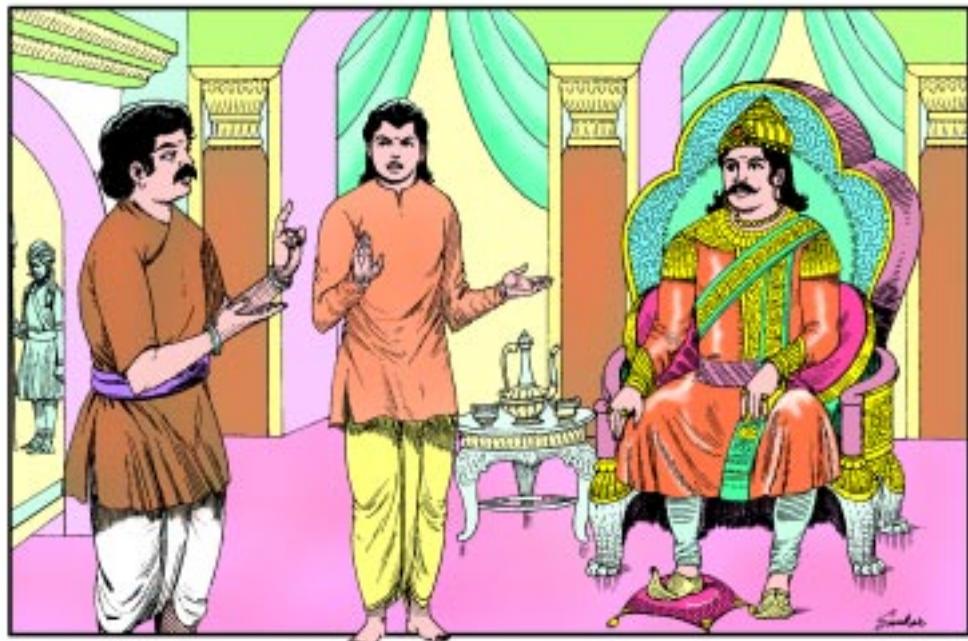
Then Spandandas unfolded his plans. “I shall tour our village and study the situation. I shall compose poems that describe the pathetic condition of the people and take them to the king. If my poetry cannot move the king to action, then I shall give up composing poems forever. And I shall not enter the village again.”



Spandandas was as good as his word. He spent two days touring the village. He was appalled by the pitiable state of affairs. Words flowed to describe the heart-rending situation. He started on his way to the capital.

On the way, he saw beautiful scenery all around and his heart was stirred. More compositions followed.

When he reached the palace gates, the guards would not let him in. “I’m a devotee of Lord Vishnu and they say, the king is a manifestation of the almighty. If the two of you, like Jaya and Vijaya, the *dwarapalas* of Lord Vishnu, do not let me in, my curse will turn you into *rakshasas* just as the curses of the three sages had done to the two *dwarapalas*.”



The guards now guessed that Spandandas was no ordinary person. They informed the king of his arrival and he was courteously welcomed in.

Spandandas introduced himself and recited a poem describing the pathetic conditions in his village. The king and all the courtiers were moved to tears by the force of his poetry.

When the king recovered composure, he turned to his minister. "Please see to it that the people of Durgapur are given all possible help!" He then told Spandandas: "Sir, your poetry has opened my eyes to the condition of my people. I shall immediately attend to the problems of not only Durgapur, but other parts of my kingdom."

The poet was very happy to hear

this. He now began reciting the poems on nature that he had composed on his way to the capital. The courtiers and the king were thrilled to listen to them. Came a request from the king: "Please stay with us in the capital and be our royal poet."

When Jagan heard that Spandandas had been offered the position of royal poet, he rushed to the capital and met the king. "The people of my village cannot live without Spandandas. It's not fair to deprive us of the pleasure of his company. It would be more appropriate to make him the chief of our village, so that we can live peacefully under his guidance and direction."

But the poet sprang a surprise on Jagan. "I've been away here in the king's

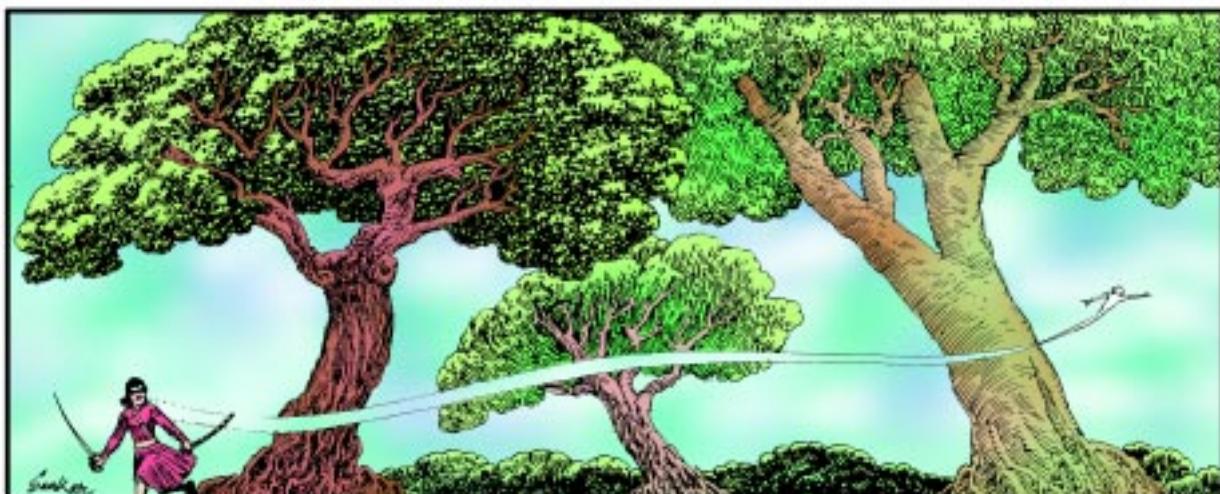
court for the last few days, and are you telling me that the residents of Durgapur were unhappy? My friend, please allow me to remain here at the king's court. I shall come to Durgapur now and then and regale our friends with my poetry. What's more important to the villagers than my presence in Durgapur is food, clothes, and peace!"

The Vetala stopped his narration and asked King Vikram: "O King, it is clear from the story that the people of Durgapur cared much for their poet. Even when they were faced with a famine, they weren't ready to abandon him. He, too, reciprocated their feelings by composing poems on their troubles, which moved the king and brought the much-needed succour to them. Why then did he decide that he would abandon the village and settle down in the capital? Wasn't that selfish of him? Didn't he betray the villagers by deserting them when he was offered power and pelf?"

King Vikram had a ready answer: "Usually, poets live in a world of

imagination and emotions. The impact of their poetry is felt mostly by the listeners and readers. In Spandandas's case, too, the villagers loved his poetry and appreciated him. He must have been surprised to hear that they valued him so much that they were ready to remain in the village with all their problems, only because he too lived there. Again, when the king was moved by his compositions to action, the poet realised the power of his words. And if you remember what the king told him then, you will realise that his poetry had stirred the king to help not only Durgapur but other areas suffering from similar conditions. Spandandas must have felt that it was better to stay in the palace and serve the whole kingdom rather than merely give the villagers of Durgapur the pleasure of listening to his poetry. His poetry could be put to better use as a royal poet."

No sooner had King Vikram given his answer than the Vetala gave him the slip. The king drew his sword and went after him.



Know Your India

Quiz

India's heritage can be said to be built on the bedrock of the Hindu mythology. Children of India are certainly familiar with the epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. They must also have heard stories from the 18 Puranas. This month's quiz is woven around the Hindu mythology. Check how familiar you are with the people and places and incidents referred to below:-

1. A group of people who need neither food nor drink, neither sleep nor rest, but are still able to perform severe penance. Can you name the group?
2. Who is the daughter of the Himalayas or rather the mountain-born? Mention two of her names with a mountain connotation.
3. A woman was turned into stone after her husband—a rishi—pronounced a curse on her. She came out of the curse when the stone received the touch from the feet of a divine person. Name the three persons in this incident.
4. While the churning of the Ocean of Milk progressed, several things manifested. One of them was an elephant, which was to become the mount of Indra, King of Devaloka. What was the elephant's name?
5. Name the father of King Kansa of Mathura, uncle of Krishna.
6. The Nagas were semi-divine beings with a human face and the tail of a serpent. One Naga was rescued by King Nala from a flaming bush. Who was this Naga?
7. Her husband was born blind, and she decided to cover her eyes as well so that she would not enjoy any advantage more than he could. Who was she?
8. It was from this forest where Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana were living in exile that Sita was abducted by Ravana. Name the forest.

(Answers next month)

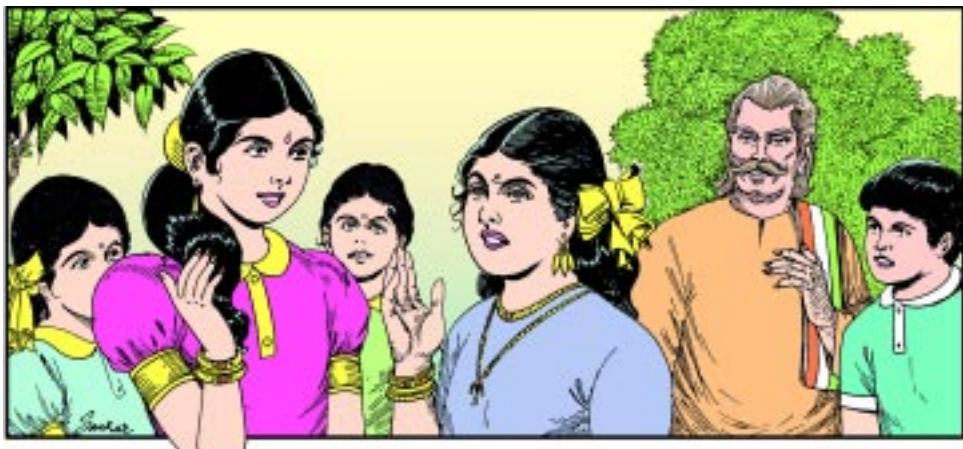
Answers to February Quiz

1. Arunachal Pradesh	6. Kerala
2. Madhya Pradesh	7. Chandigarh—Punjab and Haryana
3. Manipur	
4. Bihar, from the word 'Viharas'	8. Uttar Pradesh—Hardwar and Allahabad
5. Shimla, Himachal Pradesh	

Saga of India

Glimpses of a great civilisation –
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages

26. A strange peep into the future



Sandip, Chameli, and their friends seemed to be still under the spell of the legendary King Vikramaditya. His name came up as soon as they met again the following Sunday. "What a daring king he was!" commented Chameli.

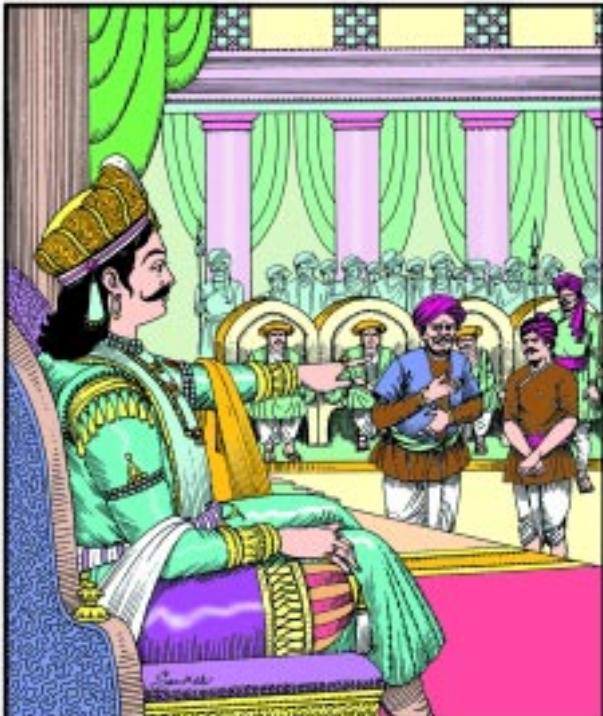
"Indeed, a king who could gather nine great geniuses in his court, including Kalidasa, must have been a genius himself!" said Dolly, one of her friends.

Grandpa Devnath laughed. "How soon you forgot what I told you the other day!" he said. "Historians do not

think that those nine geniuses lived at the same time. But, for generations together, people have been so much fascinated by Vikramaditya that they have imagined him as a king of untold courage and qualities. Who but he could have been the patron of all those scholars?"

"But surely, Grandpa, there was a monarch named Vikramaditya in the First century!" observed Sandip.

"I believe there was – and as I told you last time – he must have been a very popular and powerful king. A new era,



known as *Vikramabda*, would not commemorate an ordinary ruler. There are many in our country even today who reckon years and centuries according to this tradition,” said the professor.

“But who created those stories of vampire around him?” asked Dolly.

“I do not know. I wonder if any historian knows either. It must have happened this way: King Vikram could have been remarkable for his presence of mind, wit, and wisdom. He might have solved several problems in a brilliant way. The people of his own time must have been deeply impressed by his judgements. They probably imagined that he could solve not only problems put forth by human beings, but by a supernatural being, like a

vampire. The way he handles the vampire is indicative of his courage; his answers to the weird being’s quizzical questions suggest his wit,” said the professor.

“For example?” asked Dolly.

“Why, my child, haven’t you read those famous twenty-five tales of King Vikram and the Vampire?” demanded the professor.

Soon it was evident that barring Sandip and Chameli, the others were not familiar with those stories. But they were smart enough to turn their ignorance to their benefit. They insisted on the professor telling them some of those stories.

“Let me tell you one story which has become relevant today, because of some recent developments,” said the professor. And he narrated the following story:

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Dhavala. He came under the influence of a sage when he was a little boy and dreamed of becoming a sage himself. He wished to break away from the worldly life and led the life of an ascetic.

However, as he grew up to be a young man, his parents forced him to marry. His wife was a fine girl and he was happy. One day, his wife’s elder brother came to their house to take them to his own house on the occasion of some festival. The three happened to

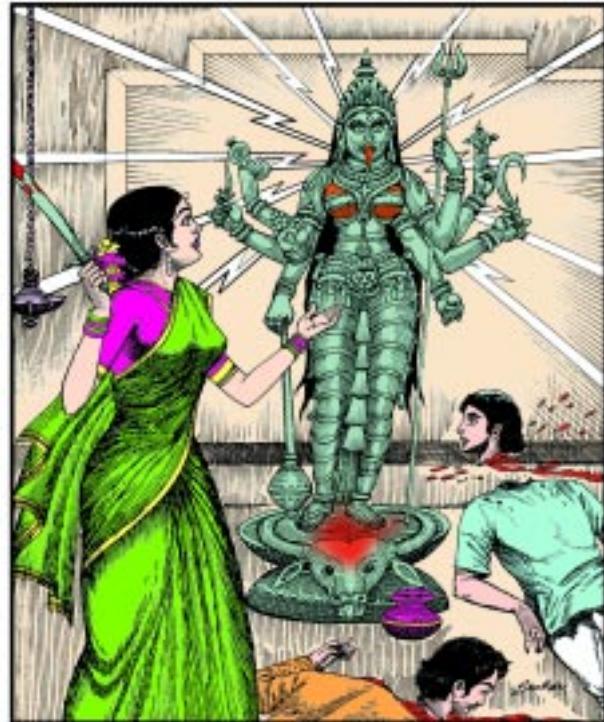
pass through a forest. After an hour's walk, the young lady felt tired and all the three sat down under a tree for a little rest.

Dhavala's eyes fell on a deserted temple. Out of curiosity he went inside. The atmosphere inside the temple, dominated by the lone idol of a goddess, was eerie. In that unearthly silence, Dhavala suddenly remembered his earlier resolution to become an ascetic. He was filled with a sense of remorse. What use living like an ordinary man, without paying any attention to God? he wondered. Then he did something unexpected. He snatched the sword in the hands of the idol and beheaded himself!

After a while his brother-in-law went inside to call him. What he saw was shocking. How could he go back and face his sister? A strange melancholy prompted him to do what Dhavala had done. He, too, beheaded himself!

An hour passed and as it was growing dusky, the girl entered the temple to find out what the matter was. What she saw, needless to say, was far more than she could bear. With her husband and her brother lost to her in that bewildering manner, how could she live? She, too, picked up the sword.

As she was about to strike herself with the weapon, she heard a voice, asking her to wait. She understood that the voice had come from the idol. "It



was foolish of your husband to think that he could not live a spiritual life unless he had renounced the world. It was equally foolish of your brother to follow your husband's example. But you need not act in haste!"

"O divine mother, how am I to live without them? Where do I go?" asked the young lady.

"Put their heads and trunks together and sprinkle on them the water in the pot at my feet. They would regain their life," said the voice.

The lady did as advised. Lo and behold, the two young men sat up.

"How strange that we should fall asleep in this desolate place," they murmured. The lady said nothing. They resumed walking.

They had gone barely a short distance when, to her horror, the lady realized the blunder she had committed. She had fixed her brother's head on her husband's body and her husband's head on her brother's body!

The vampire, who narrated the story to the king, paused and demanded of him, "O King, who should the lady look upon as her husband – the one with her husband's head or the one with her brother's head?"

At once answered the king: "Of course the one with her husband's head, for it is the head that determines one's personality!"

"Interesting and amusing!" exclaimed the small audience as the professor concluded the story.

"True, interesting and amusing it is. But didn't I say that the story I was going to narrate is also relevant to our time?

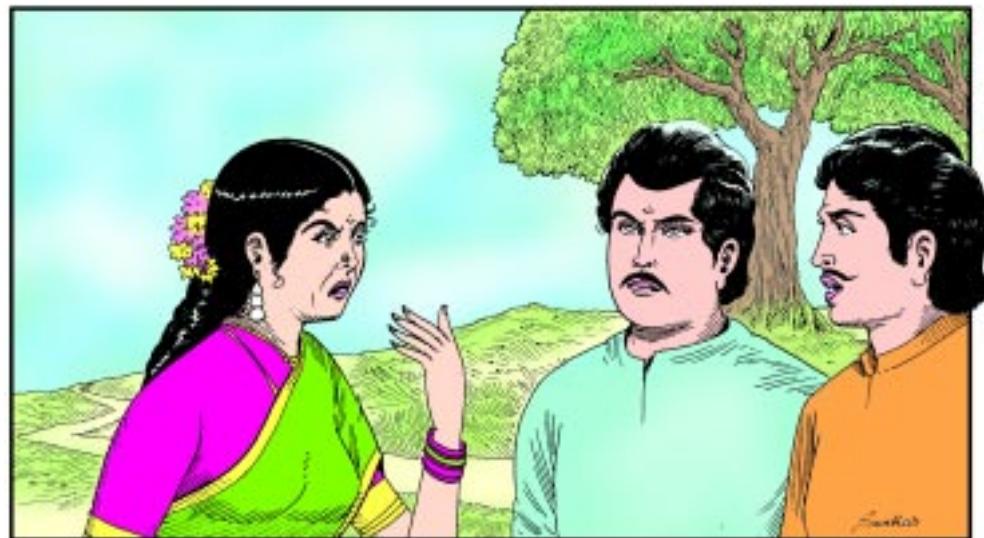
What about that?" asked the professor.

The children were a bit uncertain for a moment. It was Sandip who broke the silence. "Grandpa, has it something to do with Dr. Christiaan Barnard who died a few months ago?"

"That's right, my boy. Some four decades ago, Dr. Barnard successfully transplanted a man's heart on another. That led to some lively discussions, though they were hypothetical. Will transplantation of head also become possible? If that takes place, what would be the identity of the person who carries a borrowed head or, to put it differently, the one who goes about with a borrowed trunk? Well, don't you think King Vikram had already given the decisive answer?"

"Indeed, he had," agreed the children.

- *Visvavasu*



Akbar's secret

Guess what the secret of Emperor Akbar's glowing skin was? *Akbarnama* states that he used a kind of soap made with the waters of the lake at Lonar, near



Hero worshipping!

Talk of hero-worship! You just can't beat this. At Sindhudurg in Maharashtra on the Konkan coast is a temple devoted to a great hero: the Maratha leader Chatthrapati Sivaji. A stone idol of Sivaji with a large metal mask is worshipped at this temple. A double-edged sword that is held by the idol is said to have been one actually used by the Maratha hero! A colony of families, whose ancestors had served Sivaji, live in Sindhudurg today.

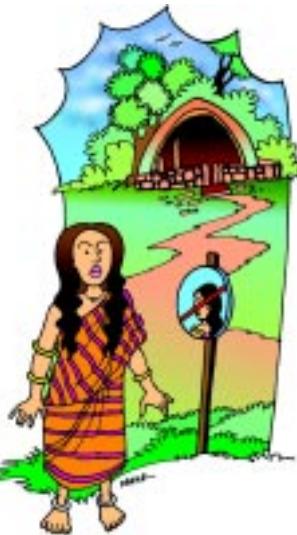


Aurangabad in Maharashtra. It is believed that the mineral wealth and the waters of this place had extraordinary medicinal and curative powers. At Lonar is formed a huge crater where, millions of years ago, an asteroid crashed into the ground. The depression of the crater is now a lake whose waters are alkaline and do not support many forms of life.

March 2002

Female Force

In the cool breezy ranges of the Nilgiri hills lives a little-known tribal community, the Todas. They live in small settlements called Munds and are essentially a pastoral people. The Todas have clear social hierarchies and strictly



follow certain rules and regulations. One rule forbids Toda women from entering their temple. In fact, traditionally, a barrier would be put up some distance from the temple and women are not permitted to pass beyond this point. And who do you think the Todas worship? A goddess they call Tekaah!

Royal colours!

How would you play Holi if you were a king, surrounded by glitz and glitter? Would you fight

shy of soiling the walls of your gorgeous palace with grubby colours? Well, then, come out of your palace for a Holi binge, or drench your pals with coloured water from the many balconies of your

bastion. That's how the kings and queens of Jaipur traditionally play Holi.

Historical records say that the kings would mount an elephant and appear in front of the



many balconies of Hawa Mahal and the other palaces. All around them would be their servants carrying heaps of small lacquer balls full of coloured water or powder. The kings would toss these at the queens and princesses who would line the windows and balconies of the palaces. The women, in their turn, would shower the royal men with coloured water from their small water pistols, called *pichkaris*.

Nutty Game

If you see fourteen men grabbing for a single coconut, what would you say? Would you wonder what was so special about the coconut that makes so many of them run after it? For all you know, they may be playing Yubee Lakpee. This snatch-a-coconut game is a popular outdoor sport among Manipuri lads. It is

a kind of rugby (no kicking, please, this is not football) that is played by ten to fourteen players at a time.

Yubee Lakpee is played on a rectangular field. At one end of the field is a boxed area. The ball, which here is a well-greased coconut, is thrown in from the other end, and the aim of the game is to get it into the boxed area. The player who grabs the coconut, clings to it, and gets into the boxed area is declared the winner. And if, in the course of the play, tempers run high or there



is much pushing around, the players are doused with cold water to separate them!

Anyone game to play Yubee Lakpee?



Men of Wit - Gopal Bhand



It was the first death anniversary of Gopal Bhand's father, and he had to travel a long distance by boat to where the priest lived. "Row the boat fast, man, I've to perform the rites at the auspicious hour!" he goaded the boatman.

The priest began chanting the *slokas* in praise of the dear departed soul, while Gopal performed the rituals. Suddenly, the priest stopped chanting. "Your father owed me a hundred rupees. Pay me the amount now, or I won't complete the ceremony!" he threatened.



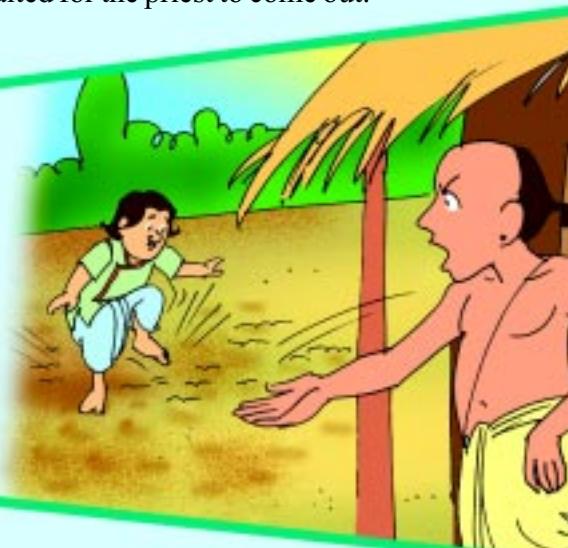
Gopal was, naturally, aghast. By all means, the auspicious moment should not be allowed to pass. "I shall certainly see that you get your money at your doorstep tomorrow morning. Let the ceremony be completed, swami!" he pleaded.

It was the season for jack-fruit. After the ceremony, Gopal went about collecting the seeds thrown in the backyard of houses. He put them into a sack and safely carried it to where he was staying. 'Didn't I say doorstep?' he mused. 'He'll get it at the doorstep itself!'

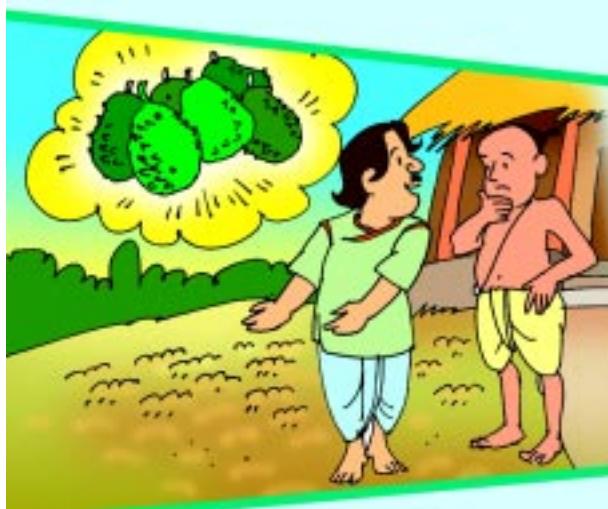




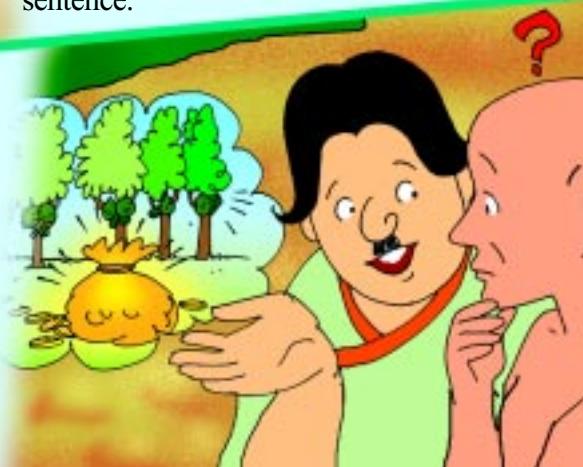
At the dead of night, Gopal went back to the priest's house and began planting the seeds in the courtyard, row by row. By dawn he completed the task and waited for the priest to come out.



The front door opened, and the priest came out as Gopal was stamping the ground where he had planted the seeds. "What're you doing, Gopal?" asked the priest, rubbing sleep out of his eyes.



"I promised to pay back the money my late father had borrowed from you, didn't I?" Gopal said in confirmation of his statement the previous day. "I've planted jack-fruit seeds here, so many of them..." Gopal did not complete the sentence.



"But jack-fruit seeds are not money, Gopal!" protested the priest. "Sir, when they grow into trees, you'll get plenty of fruit, and you can sell them and earn money!" said Gopal, adding, "Didn't I promise money right at your doorstep?" He made himself scarce before the priest could react!

Festivals of India

Holi—the festival of colours—marks the end of winter and heralds the beginning of spring. Holi occurs on the full moon day in the month of Phalgun, according to the Hindu calendar. It occurs in the month of March, according to the Gregorian calendar.

With the end of winter, the harvest being finished, the trees with their tender leaves are in full bloom—this is the time for merry-making, fun, and frolic. A three-day festival, Holi is considered the

Holi

most colourful and boisterous festival in India. Both the young and the old alike sprinkle *gulal* or coloured powder on each other.

They also splash coloured water on each other with a *pichkaari*, which is a traditional hand-pump like device, or throw *gubbare* or balloons filled with coloured water at each other. Singing, dancing, and distribution of sweets also mark this joyous occasion. Many traditional delicacies like *gujia* are prepared on this day, and adults drink a traditional liquor called *bhang*.

Holi is celebrated all over north India with gaiety. On the eve of Holi, people gather together and make a huge bonfire with the residual dry leaves and twigs of winter.

Like many other festivals, Holi celebrates the victory of good over evil. There are many legends and myths associated with this festival.

It is believed that Kansa, uncle of Lord Krishna, sent a demoness called Pootana to kill him when he was a baby. Pootana transformed herself into a beautiful woman and went to Krishna's



pots of curd and butter hung from the ceiling.

Holi derives its name from the legend of Holika, the sister of the demon-king Hiranyakashipu. His son Prahalad was a staunch devotee of Lord Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu did not like this. He tried to kill Prahalad in many ways but did not succeed.

Holika possessed a remarkable power: she could resist fire. So, one day, she kept Prahalad on her lap and entered the fire. But the fire devoured Holika and left Prahalad untouched. Thus, the day is celebrated as the victory of good over evil.

Some tips for Holi

- ✓ Wear old clothes while you play with colours.
- ✓ Take care that no coloured powder gets into your eyes.
- ✓ In case any powder gets into your eyes, wash them immediately.
- ✓ Wash yourself well after playing Holi.
- ✓ Buy good quality natural colours - not chemical ones - from reliable shops.
- ✓ Never play with balloons filled with coloured water.

house. When she tried to suckle the baby, Krishna sucked the life out of her.

On the night before Holi, an effigy of Pootana is burnt in a bonfire. Even today in Mathura, the birthplace of Krishna, Holi is celebrated by burning an effigy. It is also believed that Krishna played with *gopikas*, female cowherds, during the spring festival. Holi is mostly associated with Krishna's *rasaleela*. Holi is also associated with a game called *matka phod* in Mathura. Here the contestants vie with each other to break a matka or earthen pot, hung beyond their reach. It is believed that Krishna, who as a boy was very fond of butter, often climbed on to the shoulders of his playmates to reach the





Jamshedji Navroz

For the section of the Parsis who follow the *Fasli* calendar, New Year starts with the vernal equinox. It is celebrated on March 21, which marks the arrival of spring. Navroz literally means New Day.

The celebration of this event dates back to the legendary King of Persia, Jamshed, who systematized and introduced solar reckoning into the Persian calendar. The day the sun enters the sign of Aries was fixed as the beginning of the year. This day was called 'Navroz' or 'Jamshed Navroz'. An interesting custom that was practised on this occasion was to weigh the king in gold and silver, which would then be distributed to the poor.



On festival days, the Parsis don new clothes, worship at the temples, visit *Baghs* or social centres, call on one another, and feast. Charity is considered to be the prime virtue of the Parsi, and during festivals he is expected to be extra generous!

Good Friday

According to the Gospel, Jesus Christ was crucified on the Friday before Easter Day. So, this day is observed as Good Friday, a day of mourning in memory of the crucifixion.

Jesus Christ is believed to have died on the cross at three in the afternoon on that day. In Catholic churches, a ceremony commemorating the removal of Jesus's body from the cross is



performed at that time. No bells are rung in the churches on this day.

In some churches, mourners in black take out a procession with an image of Christ and perform the ceremonial burial. On Good Friday, all Christians observe a fast.

Muharram



Muharram is observed on the tenth day of the first Muslim month, Muharram. It marks the martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein. The day is observed in mourning.

After Prophet Muhammed passed away, a successor had to be chosen to the position of the Caliph or the Commander of the Faithful. The Prophet had not named his successor and he did not have any son. His only daughter, Fatima, was married to Ali. And they had two sons: Hasan and Hussein.

After three Caliphs succeeded the Prophet, Ali was elected the fourth Caliph. Many people were against this selection. Ali was killed, as was his son

Hasan, who succeeded him. Hussein, Ali's other son, was killed in tragic circumstances at the battle of Kerbela on the tenth day of the month of Muharram.

Muslims observe Muharram by taking out processions on this day. Taziahs or gorgeous replicas of the martyr's tomb, are part of the procession. Mourners give themselves over to public lamentations and frenzied expression of grief. At the end of the procession, the taziahs are buried or sunk in rivers or sea. Plays depicting the tragedy are also part of the Muharram observance.

The first ten days of the month of Muharram are spent in fasting, mourning, and prayer.

A folk tale from Punjab

Punjab, the land of five rivers, is situated in the northwest of India. Long ago five rivers – the Beas, Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum—flowed through Punjab. But because of territorial changes, only two rivers, Sutlej and Beas, now lie within the territory of Punjab in India.

The State is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Himachal Pradesh in the east, Haryana and Rajasthan in the south, and Pakistan in the west. The city of Chandigarh is the administrative capital of both Punjab and Haryana. The State is 50,000 sq km in area and has a population of 24,289,300. The official language is Punjabi, and the script Gurmukhi.

The present Punjab became a State of India on November 1, 1966, after a part of the area simultaneously became a full-fledged State called Haryana.

Punjab was the first State to convert agriculture technology into the green revolution. It also recorded the highest per capita availability of milk during the white revolution.

The seventh prince

*O*nce upon a time, there lived a king called Satinder, who had seven sons. In the neighbouring kingdom there was a king named Bhatinder. He had seven daughters. When Satinder's sons were old enough to marry, he thought nothing could be better than to get them married to the seven princesses. So, he sent a trusted envoy to Bhatinder to ask



for the hand of all his seven daughters. Bhatinder was taken aback. He could not believe his luck at having found suitable bridegrooms for all his seven daughters in one go, and so he agreed at once.

Now Rajender, the seventh son of Satinder, was a rather peculiar fellow. 'Why should I get married just because my brothers do?' he thought. So, he told his father that he was not ready as yet to get married.

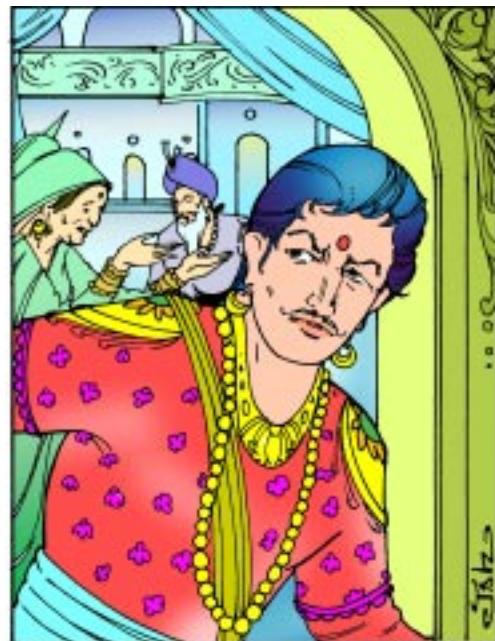
"*Arre, puttar!*" said his hassled father. "Why do you want to trouble me in my old age? *Acchi kudee hai!* Marry her!" His father tried hard to persuade him. But Rajender was adamant.

There being no other way, the six sons and the six daughters were wedded. The youngest princess stayed with her parents. The others were sent off ceremoniously to their husbands' house.

Now the six princesses felt that Rajender should be made to see reason and marry their youngest sister. The first one tried, and then when he wouldn't agree, she got annoyed and asked: "Well, what are you going to do, then? Marry *Anarkali*? Where will you find your pomegranate princess?"

Each of the sisters taunted him thus. "So, you're going to marry *Anarkali*?" they asked.

Rajender got very angry. He told his father, "I'm going away and won't come



back until I find and marry *Anarkali*."

His father scowled, his mother pleaded, and his brothers scolded, but all that had no effect on him. He set off on his swift white *ghoda* to look for *Anarkali*, though he was *ainsicq* where to look for her or indeed if she really existed.

He rode for a long, long time. Then he came to a garden that looked rather dry and unkempt. Rajender got off his horse, for he was quite tired now, and lay down under the shade of a tree. Soon he slept. When he got up, it was evening. He wandered around the garden and found a big pool full of water, and some pots. After drinking some water, he decided to water the plants in the garden, as they were rather

Balle Balle!

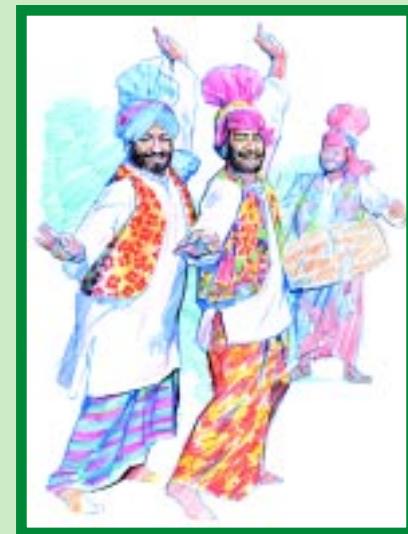
Punjab is almost synonymous with two folk dances: the gidda and the bhangra. Earlier, bhangra used to be performed in villages after harvest during Baisakhi (April 13). Nowadays Bhangra can be seen performed during marriages, New Year celebrations, birthdays, and all community functions.

The major attraction of the folk dance is the fast-paced music and rhythms. The dhol, a kind of drum, is the most important instrument associated with the dance. The lyrics of the songs are mostly based on the legends of Punjab.

dry. Then he explored the garden. He came across a *sant* seated in a deep *idawn*.

In fact, the garden had been made by that holy man. He would look after the garden for six months, and then for the next six months he would go into a trance. When he came out of the trance, he revived the garden again. The prince stayed in the garden and waited for the holy man to open his eyes, as he felt that he might know where to look for *Anarkali*.

After some days, the garden showed the result of all the care the



prince showered on it: beautiful, colourful, fragrant blossoms appeared everywhere.

One day, the *sant* came out of his trance and opened his eyes. He saw the beautiful, well cared for garden and was pleased. Just then the prince came around with a pot of water. He saw that the holy one had come out of the trance. He bowed low.

“My son,” said the *sant*, “are you the one who has looked after the garden?”

“Yes, but I haven’t done much except water the garden,” said the prince modestly.

“You’re a good man. I’m pleased with you and will give you anything you want,” said the *sant*.

Rajender thanked him politely and said: “I’m a prince and there is wealth and prosperity aplenty in my house. But I’ve come in search of *Anarkali* and if you can

tell me where she is, I'll be very grateful."

"Take this ball and bounce it along the path and it will stop under a pomegranate tree. When it does that, pluck the biggest pomegranate you see. You will find your *Anarkali* there. Only, don't cut open the fruit till you reach home or else you will lose her."

The prince did as he was told and took the large pomegranate home. When he got near his home, he stopped to rest in a garden. There he was struck by a sudden fear that he might not find the princess inside the fruit and would look a fool in front of everyone. So he cut open the fruit. At once a beautiful girl emerged, dressed in green and gold clothes and wearing a beautiful *mala*. She quite took his breath away and the prince fell into a deep faint. Anarkali, for it was indeed she, took his head in her lap and waited for him to come around.

Just then a woman called Harpreet came by. "Who are you, beautiful girl? What are you doing here?" she asked Anarkali.

The simple princess told her everything. "He saw me only for a fleeting moment before he fainted. I'm waiting for him to recover," she explained.

Harpreet wanted to marry the prince herself and so she pretended to be fascinated by the clothes and jewellery that the princess wore.

"What a lovely *lehenga* you are



wearing! And your *odhni*...how beautiful it is! Will you exchange these clothes with me for some time? I've never worn such lovely clothes and I long to see how I look in them!" She persuaded the princess to let her try them on.

Then she said, "I wonder how I look in these lovely clothes? There's a well in this garden and I'd like to look at my *aks* in the water in the well. Will you please come with me?"

They walked to the well and peeped in. While the princess was peering, Harpreet pushed her in. She then pulled the veil over the head and took her place near the prince. When the prince woke up, she told him that she was Anarkali. He was a little doubtful because she did not seem as beautiful as he remembered, but anyhow there was no one else around, and so he took her home with him.

They were welcomed with great ceremony. They were married and settled down in a beautiful home. Soon the kingdom buzzed with the news of a beautiful flower that was growing in the well where Harpreet had pushed the princess in. It was rumoured that no one could pluck the flower. Harpreet, who had married the prince, heard this. The next morning she took to her bed with a bad headache.

“How can I help you?” asked Rajender.

“Pluck the flower growing in the well and grind its petals and apply the paste on my forehead,” she said.

So, the prince went and plucked the flower, ground the petals, and applied it on his wife’s forehead. At once, the most terrible pain went shooting through her head. She removed the paste and threw it over the terrace wall into the palace grounds.

Soon a beautiful garden grew in the place where Harpreet had thrown the

paste. In the middle of the garden grew a most beautiful pomegranate with a huge, red, shiny fruit hanging from it.

When Harpreet went to her terrace a few days later, she saw the beautiful garden and the pomegranate tree and fruit and was shocked out of her wits. At once she went to her room and started groaning. “Oh, I’ve a terrible pain and it won’t go away until the garden in the palace ground is completely rooted out,” she moaned to the prince.

So, Rajender had it announced that whoever wanted to was welcome to take away all the plants, fruits, and flowers from the palace grounds.

All the people rushed to take away the beautiful flowers and plants.

The last to come was a young boy. He found only the big fruit on the tree. Somehow no one had taken it away. He plucked it and took it home and gave it to his old mother. At night, after they had eaten their supper of *sarson ka sag*

Handicrafts

Punjab is famous for its handicrafts. Attractive durries that are spread on the floor are woven by young girls. Traditional designs and motifs are used. Another craft unique to Punjab is its needlework called phulkari which is done on all kinds of textiles including the rumals or handkerchiefs. The wooden carvings of Punjab are also very famous.





and *makkai ki roti* with a little butter, the mother decided to cut the fruit. As soon as she cut the fruit, the lovely *Anarkali* came out.

“Don’t be afraid,” she said. “Adopt me as your *thhee* and I’ll help you earn your livelihood.”

The mother and son were fascinated by the beautiful and soft-spoken *kudee* and agreed.

The next day the princess picked up a piece of cloth and some skeins of thread and embroidered a beautiful *phulkari rumal*.

“Take this to Prince Rajender and sell it to him,” she told the boy. “He will give you a good price for it.”

The boy did just that. The prince was greatly attracted by the exquisite embroidery and asked the boy who had made it.

Glossary

Arre, puttar: O, son!

Acchi kudee hai: She is a nice girl.

Anarkali: Pomegranate princess

Ghoda: Horse

Ainsicq: Uncertain

Sant: Holy man

Idawn: Meditation

Mala: Necklace

Lehenga: A long flowing skirt

Odhni: Upper cloth

Aks: Reflection

Sarson ka sag: Mustard leaves

Makkai ki roti: Roti made of maize flour

Thhee: Daughter

Phulkari rumal: Embroidered handkerchief

“My sister,” said the boy.

‘Anyone who can embroider something so delicate must be lovely and delicate herself,’ thought the prince.

“Can you take me to your home so that I can meet her?” he asked.

The boy could, of course, not refuse the prince and so he took him home. The prince at once recognised *Anarkali* and, after taking his mother’s permission, he married her. Then he went back to the palace and had Harpreet banished from the country.

Rajender and Anarkali lived happily together for a long time.

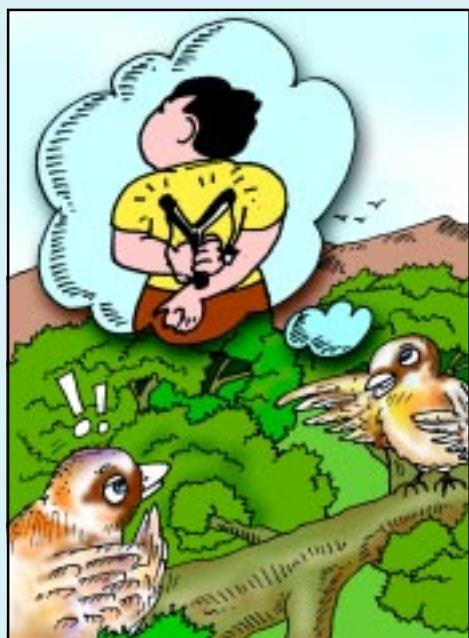
The street-smart sparrow

The mother sparrow looked at her littlest one a little dubiously. All the others in her brood had learnt to fly and had gone away to fend for themselves. Only this little fellow remained. And when she looked at his remarkable round big eyes, which were so limpid and innocent, she could not believe that he would ever learn to take care of himself.

She sighed: she would do her best by him, and for the rest, the little fellow would have to do the best he could.

“Come, my child!” she addressed him gently. “It is time you learnt to fly!”

“Yes, mama!” he answered, rolling his eyeballs, and followed her meekly.



He learnt fast and every day he could fly a little farther till soon he had gone all around the village, by himself.

Mama sparrow was pleased for him. Yes, he had learnt to fly. But would he learn the ways of the world as easily? She had her doubts. So she decided to give him a few tips that might help him survive.

“Now you must learn to look after yourself. But let me give you some advice that might help you,” said she. “If you’re in a field and you see a man or a boy coming towards you with a bow and a sling of arrows or with a catapult, fly away! They’re sure to take a shot at you!”

“All right, mama!” the little one nodded his head.

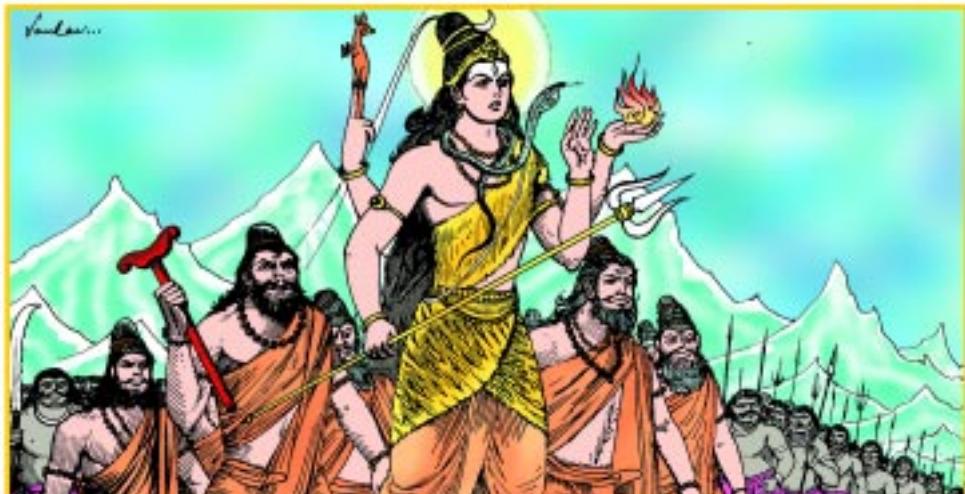
“And if anyone standing close by bends to the ground suddenly, fly away fast! He is probably picking up a stone to throw at you!”

“Yes, mama,” said the young one.

“You need not fear anyone who is not bending down or is not carrying anything in his hand,” ended mama.

“But what if someone is carrying a stone in his pocket?” asked the little fellow.

There was a moment’s silence. “You know more than I do. You’ll survive! Now, off with you!” said mama.



The Story of Ganesa

One of the asuras, Tarakasura, had propitiated Lord Brahma and received a boon from him. The Lord had assured him that his end would come about only at the hands of a son born to Lord Siva. The devas, after ensuring that Siva married Parvati, the daughter of Himavan, were now anxiously waiting for the birth of a son to the divine couple.

Tarakasura was overlording the world of asuras. He ruled with the help of three other asuras called Tripurasuras, who flew across the skies, dropping fireballs over villages, and creating havoc everywhere. The devas realised that only Lord Siva

could check the three asuras.

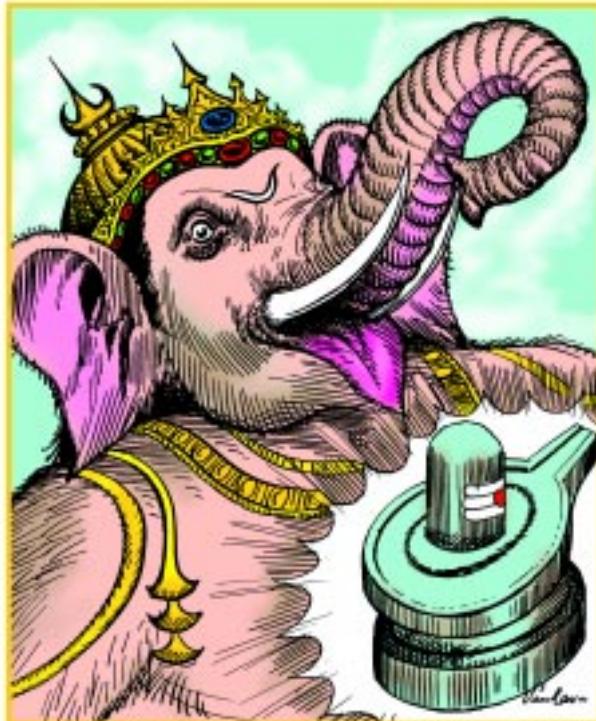
Suddenly, a demon looking like an elephant, but with a hairy growth all over, made his appearance, terrorising everybody. He was Gajasura. A devotee of Siva, he had been blessed with a boon that he could be killed only by the Lord himself.

It was at this time that Sage Narada went up to him and gave this advice: “O! Rakshasa king! It’s better that you hide Siva from the devas!”

Gajasura was happy. He meditated on Siva, and the Lord agreed to his wish and entered his heart in the shape of a *linga*.

Meanwhile, the devas, who were

3. Encounter with Siva



eagerly waiting for a son of Siva powerful enough to kill Tarakasura, approached Narada who advised them to worship Lord Siva now enshrined in the heart of Gajasura. Accordingly, the devas went up to Gajasura and began chanting the name of the Lord. When he heard the Lord's name, the Rakshasa king, too, joined them in chanting his name.

Now, the Lord decided to come out of Gajasura, who was not happy over the prospect of losing his life. "Why have you done this to me, O Lord!" wailed Gajasura.

"Don't take this amiss, Gajasura!" Siva tried to console his devotee. "For your satisfaction, you shall see me

wearing an elephant skin henceforth."

Siva now prepared to assume his original form to proceed against Tripurasuras. He made the Earth his chariot; the Sun and the Moon were the two wheels of the chariot; the four Vedas were the horses, and Lord Brahma himself became the charioteer. The mountain Mahameru was his bow, while Lord Vishnu himself was the arrow. For Siva's escort came Nandi, Sringi, and Mrungi who were all his ganas in attendance. The Lord was, thus, all powerful for his fight with Tripurasuras. The devas numbering some hundred thousand, accompanied by their wives, followed Siva to watch the fight.

Sage Narada now went to warn Parvati. "Tarakasura is agitated. He has acquired a boon that no one else than your son born to Siva will be capable of killing him. He may, therefore, cause a lot of havoc among the devas. He has for his help Vajradanta, an asura with magic powers. Please be wary of his mischiefs."

Parvati was worried. She thought an oil bath might bring her some relief, and so prepared herself for a bath. As she began applying a powder on her body, she took a handful of the powder and made a small figure with it. The

figure soon assumed a handsome form. "My child, who are you?" she asked of him.

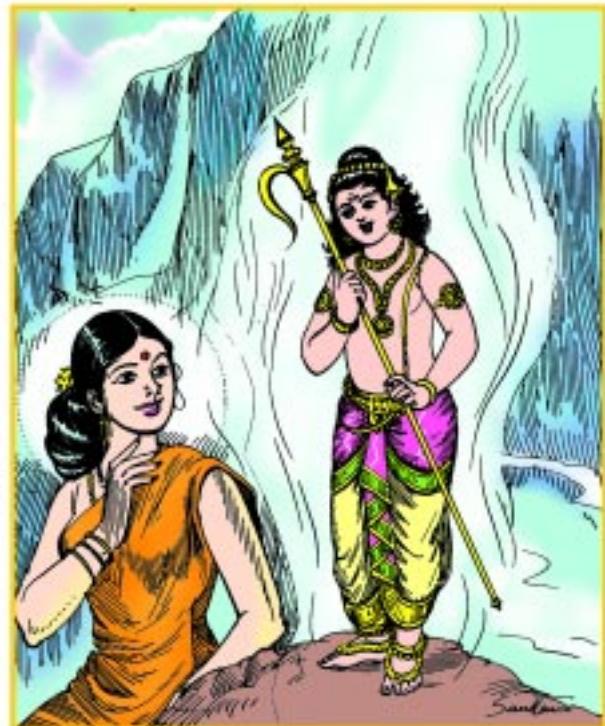
"You've already addressed me as your child, mother!" he replied. "Please accept me as your own child. My name is Ganapati."

Parvati took him into her lap and kissed him and caressed him. After preparing some delicacies for him, she gave him a goad and a mace and said: "I shall now go for my bath. Keep guard over the place, and don't let anybody in, not even an insect."

Meanwhile, Tarakasura was contemplating plans to escape death. He thought of a foolproof method: after all, he could be killed only by a son born to Parvati. Why not kill Parvati herself, so that she would not give birth to a son?

He called Vajradanta and asked him to kidnap Parvati and bring her to him. Now Vajradanta had such powers that he could break the mightiest of mighty weapons. He took the form of a mouse, bore a hole in the mountain, and lived there calling himself Mooshikasura.

He sent two of his servants, Karni and Gokarna, to bring Parvati to him. They assumed the form of two strong and hefty youth and approached the entrance to Sivaloka, where Ganapati



was standing guard. They invited him to play with them.

In turn Ganapati asked them to share the food Parvati had prepared for him. When they approached Ganapati, he threw some sweetballs at them. They had suddenly become so hard that Karni and Gokarna were felled. As they got up and began to run away, Ganapati called them and said: "You both catch hold of your ears and say 'Please forgive us' bending your legs three times. Then give a slap to your-self?"

Ganapati saw them do that, and allowed them to run away. They ran to their master Vajradanta and told him of all that had happened. He was



furious. He took the form of a mouse and went to the main door of Sivaloka and bore a hole to gain entry.

Ganapati quickly caught hold of the mouse by its tail, hit it three times on the head, and threw it far away. When Vajradanta fell down, he was no longer a mouse, but a rakshasa. He fell down near where his wife Dhavaladevi was sitting. She was a devotee of Lord Siva, who had assured her that Vajradanta would have a long life, and would not die. She reminded her husband of this boon and warned him not to harm Parvati who was the consort of Lord Siva.

After annihilating the three Tripurasuras, Lord Siva went back to

his abode where, much to his surprise and annoyance, he was refused entry by Ganapati.

“Who are you?” he asked of the little boy at the entrance.

Ganapati merely laughed and said: “I’m my mother’s son. And who are you?” he asked in return. “You’ve an uncouth appearance, with your matted hair and the coiled serpent on your neck. I can’t allow you in. My mother has asked me not to let in even an insect. Please go away.”

“But I’m a god!” insisted Siva.

“I’ve nothing to do with gods and devas,” replied Ganapati. “My mother is Prakriti and whatever she has ordered will be carried out. That’s my duty. I’m only obeying her command.”

At that time, the attendants of Siva and the devas who had all watched the fight between Siva and the three asuras reached there singing the glory of the Lord, recalling his daring deeds. They were surprised to see Siva engaged in a wordy duel with a little boy.

“You’re a little boy; what do you know of God?” Siva was heard asking Ganapati.

“It’s really strange that a grown-up like you does not know the Truth!” retorted Ganapati. “Have you heard of the Trimurthis? They are Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara. They



together formed the colours red, blue, and white. Brahma and Vishnu did not obey Prakriti, so she opened her third eye, and looked at both of them who were turned to ashes. However, Maheswara was intelligent and wise. He assured Prakriti that he would obey her command, but before that, she should give up her third eye for him.”

Lord Siva and everybody else were listening to Ganapati with rapt attention. He continued: “Devi then took off her third eye and placed it on the forehead of Maheswara. He immediately looked at her. She was reduced to ashes. As the fire from the

third eye engulfed Devi, some particles fell all over the universe which was thus gifted with a glow. From the glow was born Siva. Devi rose from the ashes in her original form of Prakriti and acquired the name Mahamaya. She now blessed Siva who requested her to bring Brahma and Vishnu back to life, which she did. The rest of the ashes manifested as Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Uma who were accepted as consorts by Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva respectively. Prakriti asked them to take care of the universe and disappeared.”

Lord Siva, who was listening to the narration, remarked: “All that you were

saying is just a myth."

"Ah! There you are mistaken!" commented Ganapati. "A while ago, you were saying that you are a god. Suppose I were to say it is a myth! Please understand that the entire universe can be attributed to the powers of Prakriti and none else. Won't you agree?"

Vishnu interjected and began praising Ganapati. Brahma was left in wonderment over Ganapati's arguments. There was a smile on the faces of the womenfolk in the crowd. But Siva was red with anger. "Don't stand in my way, let me enter my abode!"

Ganapati stood firm at the entrance. "As long as there's life in me, I shall not allow anyone to enter," he said.

Siva beckoned to his assistants to push out Ganapati, who merely smiled. "You were calling me a little boy, yet you want your powerful attendants to

use force on me! Is this proper? I'm the master of ganas like them."

He then hit the ground with his goad and mace with such force that a thousand more forms of Ganapati manifested and they all carried a goad and a mace each in their hands. They got ready for a fight with Siva. His attendants ran away fearing for their lives.

Siva was still furious. He took up his trident, but Ganapati resisted. "As long as this mace given by my mother remains in my hands, nobody would be able to do any harm to me," he warned Siva. He then dropped the goad and the mace from his hand.

Siva now aimed his trident against Ganapati's neck. He called out: "O Mother!" before his head got separated from the body. The head rose towards the sky like a glow and disappeared. **(To continue)**



Chandrapuri is beset with rumours that King Mahendravarma has been kidnapped. An Oracle tells Narendradeva that Tantrik Nagabandhu may reveal where the king has been kept. He goes to meet the Tantrik who, he is told, insists on everybody following certain rules.

Narendradeva is visibly irritated.

Your guest will have to abide by Master's instructions.

Don't they know that I'm the Commander? How can they order me about?

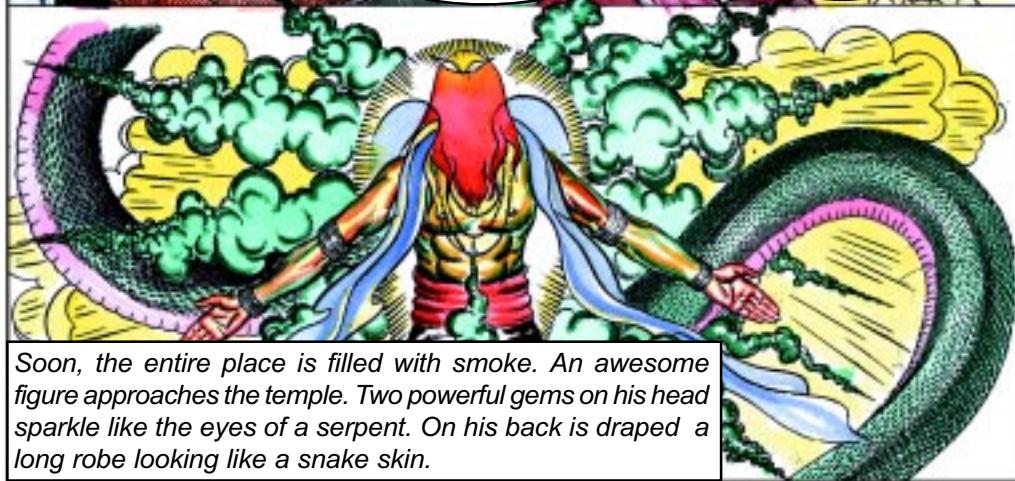
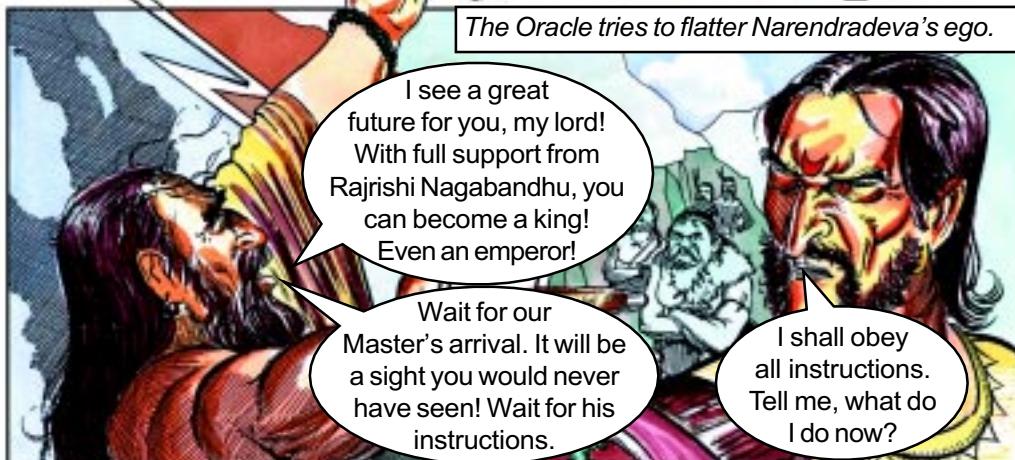
Of course, he'll observe all formalities. He'll please our Master.

To the hearing of Narendradeva and others, the Oracle makes an announcement.

Our Master makes his appearance only on few days. He demands total surrender by his devotees and acceptance as Supreme Master.

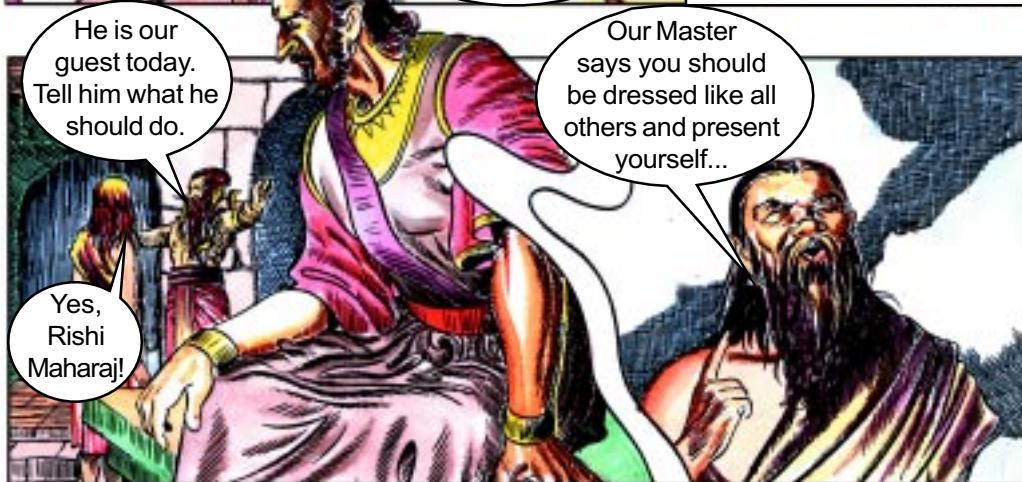


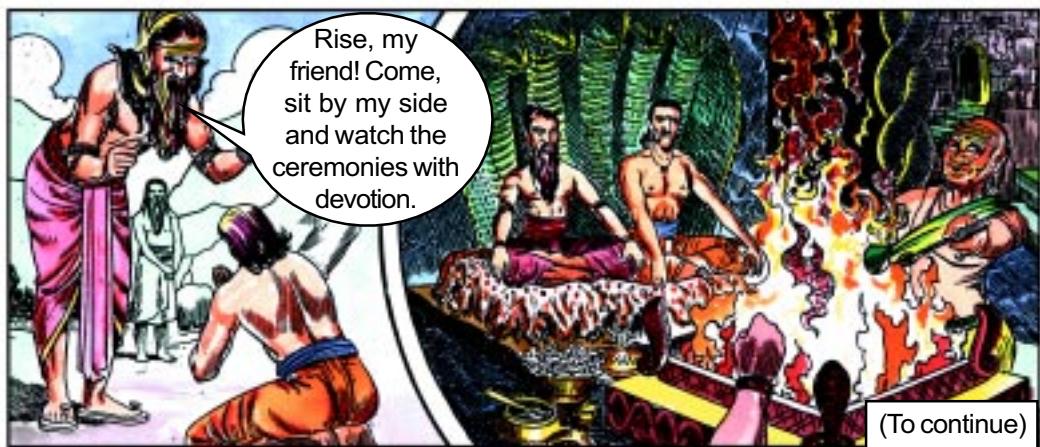
The Oracle tries to flatter Narendradeva's ego.



Soon, the entire place is filled with smoke. An awesome figure approaches the temple. Two powerful gems on his head sparkle like the eyes of a serpent. On his back is draped a long robe looking like a snake skin.

His front is bare, except for a loin cloth tied at his waist. The herbal paste smeared on his body gives out a pungent smell. Two snakes lie coiled around his neck like a garland. As he passes by Narendradeva, the Tantrik stops and laughs fearfully.





A Red Indian story

The First Moccasins

There was once a great Chief of an Indian tribe which lived on the plains. This Chief had a major problem. His feet were very tender. The people of his tribe lived by hunting buffaloes and other animals. They also made, grew, and did many other things on the plains. All of them, therefore, had to walk around for miles and so did their Chief, because he was their leader. They had no horses and sped around on bare feet, but luckily very few of them had tender feet. So, it was very embarrassing for the Chief to hobble around on tender feet that hurt when he stepped on a small pebble. This made him an irritable and angry man. He would call Clever Head, the medicine man, every day and ask: "Well, have you found a solution? What's the point of having a clever head if you can't solve this small problem?"

The small problem was, of course, his tender feet. He very much wished to walk around on the plains without hurting his feet!

Finally, one day Chief Tender Feet told the medicine

Chandamama

man, "If you don't find a solution soon, I'll have to get rid of you."

Now this threat meant death, for that was the only way the Chief could get rid of him. Medicine men could not be sacked.

Clever Head thought and thought and finally he worked out something. He knew it was not a foolproof plan but this was the best he could manage, and he hoped it would do while he waited for inspiration to strike.

The women of the tribe wove mats out of the tall grass that grew



plentifully on the plains. They were soft and, Clever Head thought, would keep the Chief's feet from being hurt. He got the women to weave a long, soft, narrow mat. He rolled it up and took it to the Chief. He appointed four healthy young braves. Their job was to unroll the mat in front of Chief Tender Feet whenever he wanted to go anywhere.

For many days the Chief tramped about in comfort all over the plains with the four braves unrolling the mat in front of him wherever he went. Now Clever Head had told the braves to be careful about where they unrolled the mat. He told them that they should keep away from places strewn with stones or nettles, for, they would poke through the mat and then the Chief's tender feet would get hurt.

One day, the braves became overconfident and were a little careless. They placed the mat over ground full of stone chips. As soon

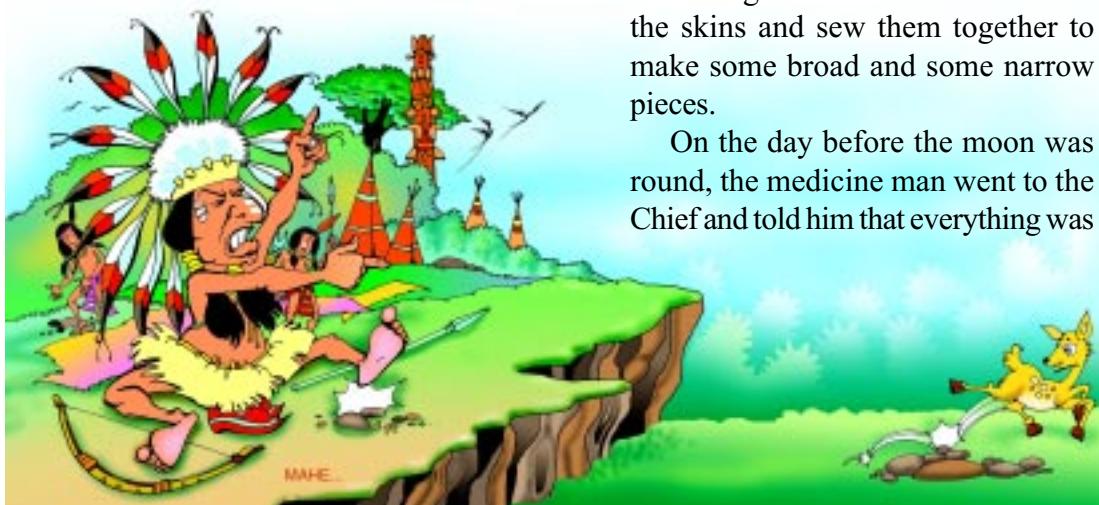
as Chief TF (to give his short name) stepped on them, he uttered a series of war whoops that could be heard clear across the plains.

Poor Clever Head was once again summoned. He had never seen Chief TF so angry! "Cover the whole earth with mats so thick that my feet will not suffer!" thundered Chief TF. "If you fail, you will die next full moon day!"

Now the poor medicine man sat outside his wigwam, with his clever head sunk in his hands, wondering what to do. He did not wish to be put to death on the night of the full moon, but he could think of no way to avoid it. Suddenly, he saw the skin of an animal hung out to dry, and an idea flashed in his mind. He thought, 'Why don't I cover the plains and the forests where the Chief walks, or as much of it as I can, with the skins of animals?'

He sent out many braves to hunt for as many animals as they could. Then he got the women to clean out the skins and sew them together to make some broad and some narrow pieces.

On the day before the moon was round, the medicine man went to the Chief and told him that everything was



ready. When the Chief looked from the door of his big wigwam, he saw many paths of skin stretching as far as he could see. Long strips that could be moved from place to place connected the main leather paths. The Chief was happy. He thought his problem had been truly solved. Clever Head, however, knew that if for any reason the Chief stepped out of the path onto the ground, there would be trouble. He hoped sincerely that by then he would have thought of something better.

Then it happened just as Clever Head had feared. One day, as the Big Chief was walking along one of his smooth, tough leather paths, he saw a deer leaping ahead of him. He decided to chase it because he had a sudden yearning for deer meat. As he swiftly followed the deer he failed to see where he was going and his feet trod on a bunch of sharp thorns. The hideous howls of the Chief could be heard clear across the plains. Clever Head heard it, too, and he knew that if his clever head did not come up with something really good, he would lose it for sure.

The Chief did not stop yelling for two days. When the pain eased a little and he could speak, he had Clever Head summoned. "Enough!" he said in a voice that resembled the Niagara Falls. "I've no more time to give you.

Tomorrow when the sun is high up in the sky, you will go to the Land of the Dark Shadows!"

Clever Head climbed to the top of a high hill in search of comfort and inspiration from friendly spirits. He had only the glimmer of an idea that twinkled softly in his head. He thought that in the calm of the night he might find a true solution. After a while, he fell asleep right there under the stars.



Chandamama

MAHE...

C M Y K

Then he got up with a start. He tore down the hill to his house and worked feverishly all night. Just before noon the next day, he was ready for the braves he knew would come to take him to the Chief. He welcomed them with a cheerful smile as he picked up something wrapped in deerskin. His cheerful smile surprised those who saw him pass. "Well, he sure is a brave man," they told each other.

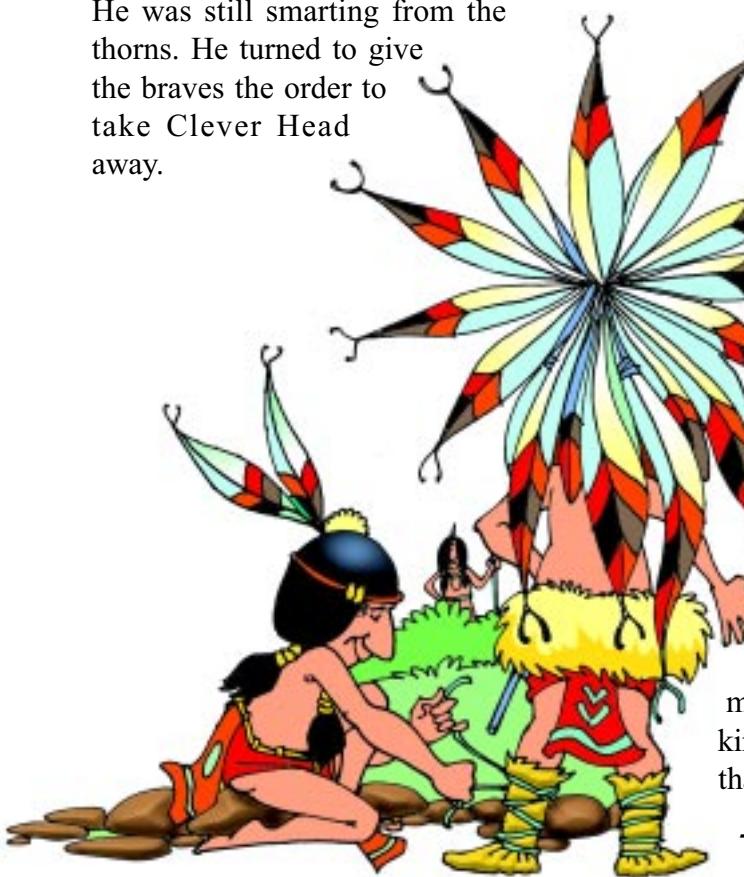
The Big Chief was waiting outside his lodge tapping his foot impatiently. He was still smarting from the thorns. He turned to give the braves the order to take Clever Head away.

Just then Clever Head knelt in front of the Chief and asked that he be allowed to say something. The Chief looked at Clever Head who had been his adviser and friend for so many moons, and slowly agreed. Clever Head swiftly unrolled his deer skin bundle and took out two objects from it. He slipped one of them on each foot of the Chief. The Chief seemed to be wearing a pair smooth animal feet over his bare feet.

He was wondering what the medicine man had done when Clever Head told him joyfully, "O Great Chief, I've found a way of covering the world with smooth hide for you. You can walk wherever you want. These will protect your feet all the time." And so they did.

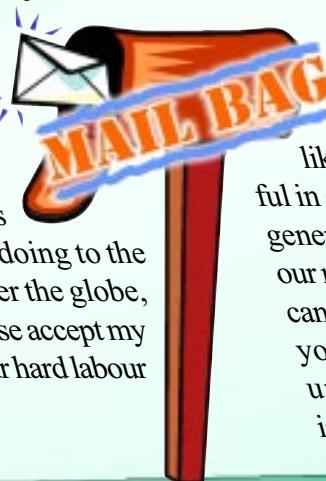
After that time, many Indians wore the kind of shoes or moccasins that Clever Head invented.

-Retold by Uma Raman



**Shri Dwarika Prasad Gupta of
Sri Aurobindo Society,
Pondicherry, writes:**

Chandamama is reaching new heights, with the introduction of some new features. It is a great yeoman's service the magazine is doing to the world of children all over the globe, unparalleled so far. Please accept my congratulations for your hard labour and deep thinking.



Shri Manish Gala, principal of a school in Gandhidham, Kutch, has this to say:

Both young and old read Chandamama. Everybody likes it. The serials might be helpful in changing the attitude of today's generation positively. Biographies of our national heroes at regular intervals can inculcate patriotism in not only the younger generation but even grown-ups. Everything in the magazine is interesting.

Browsers' Corner

- ✉ "It is so good to see Chandamama website. Hope to see Sanskrit stories also in that." - *Sarasvati Mohan*
- ✉ "The basic lay-out is excellent. Kindly make sure to keep the site rich. Children's website in USA are very resourceful." - *Parimal Mehta*
- ✉ "The site is great! Expecting to see in regional languages, too." - *Phalguni*
- ✉ "Please put stories with pictures (at least 2-3 per month). Let the site bring in lots of page views, and let Chandamama grow." - *Vinayak Kamat*
- ✉ "Your website is really good. Kids are certainly going to love it." - *Surya K. Sharma*
- ✉ "Your website is superb—both in content and colour. Looking forward to more pages." - *M. Balu*
- ✉ "This is a very good move to go online, although it is late." - *Nham Kandala*
- ✉ "The site is very colourful and easy to navigate." - *Ram Pejawar*
- ✉ "Cool site... really liked it. Have fun." - *Sweth*
- ✉ "It's certainly great news for me. I can circulate the same to a huge crowd." - *Deepak*
- ✉ "The graphics are great, and the games real fun." - *Uma Raman*



NEWS FLASH

A SWIM WITH SNAKES

We have heard of people doing dare-devil acts—like living with poisonous snakes inside glass cages for everybody to see, for days together. A group of Chinese women have been presenting a daily performance of taking a swim in a pool along with snakes—as many as 500 of them! This takes place in the Happy Valley Park in Xiamen, a city in Fujian Province. The women hope to get an entry in the *Guinness Book of Records* by the time they end their show in March.



STICKING TO SKIN



Seventy-year-old Liew Thow Lin of Malaysia has an “exceptional” skin. When he takes a spoon, knife, or a fork near his chest, they are attracted like a magnet, and they stick on the skin. A metal plate sticking like that can easily carry—say, bricks—weighing up to 30 kg. Scientists attached to the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia tried to find out whether his body is surrounded by any magnetic field. They could not find any. Anyway, he has earned the epithet Mr. Magnet.

NON-STOP FOR 50 YEARS

Some 30-40 years ago, it was very common for movies to enjoy a long run in theatres. That was because not many films were made and released in a year. A long run also indicated an engrossing story besides the presence of

popular actors and actresses. Now think of a stage play that has run for 50 years day after day. That is the record of *The Mousetrap* by Agatha Christie, creator of that famous detective Hercule Poirot. The play is a thriller, “and most people like a jolly good thriller,” says Mr. David Turner who has been directing the play for the last 15 years. The play opened in a theatre in London in 1952. And since then 8,250,000 persons have watched it. The play was also staged in 44 countries.



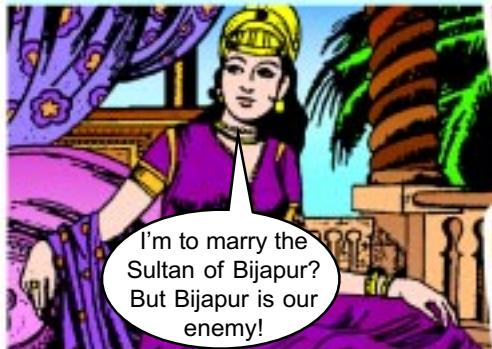
BY THE SKIN OF HIS TEETH!

Not figuratively, but literally. That was Gamin Wasantha Kumara, a farmer in Sri Lanka. He pulled a railway carriage weighing 40 tonnes with his teeth. The carriage parked at the Colombo railway station moved 25 metres (nearly 80 ft), getting him an entry in the *Guinness*.



Women who made history

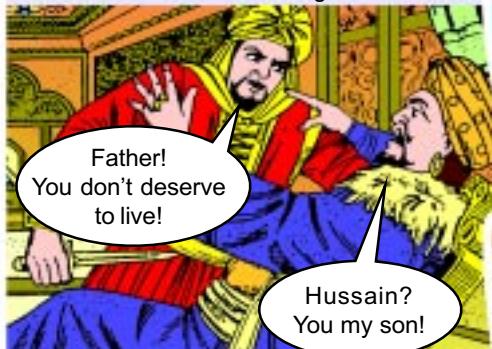
Princess Chand of Ahmednagar was as charming as the moon. She kept herself to her apartments, but word of her courage and wisdom had travelled far.



Adil Shah was assassinated before Chand could give him a child. His 9-year-old nephew, Ibrahim, succeeded him to the throne.



At Ahmednagar, Chand's brother Murtaza, who had become the ruler, was murdered by his son. He himself was deposed and killed. Chand was about to go back.

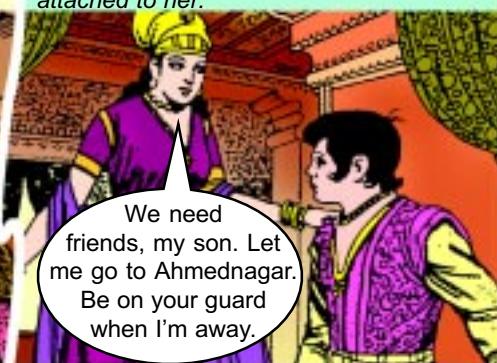


CHAND SULTANA

Ahmednagar and Bijapur were rivals claiming Sholapur. According to a compromise, Ali Adil Shah would marry Chand, and Sholapur would go to Bijapur as dowry.



The nobles and officials in Bijapur found in Chand Sultana a big hindrance to their plans. Ibrahim, however, was very much attached to her.



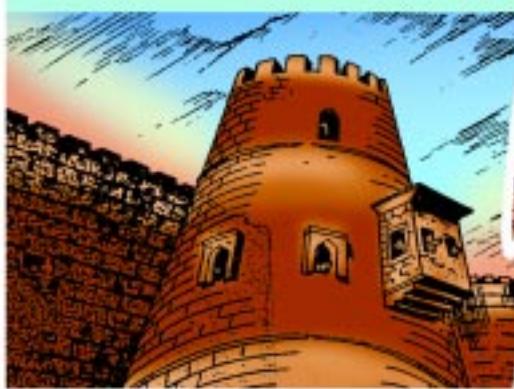
The Mughal emperor Akbar sent his army to annex Ahmednagar. Finding that there was no one to lead the army, Chand decided to take over command.



The Mughal cannons smashed a portion of the Ahmednagar fort by evening, but the soldiers did not attempt to enter at night lest they be trapped.



By morning, the broken down wall was repaired, and cannons fixed at strategic points to charge at the invading army.



The Mughals were frustrated. They made peace with Ahmednagar. Chand Sultana was hailed as the saviour of Ahmednagar.



Chandamama

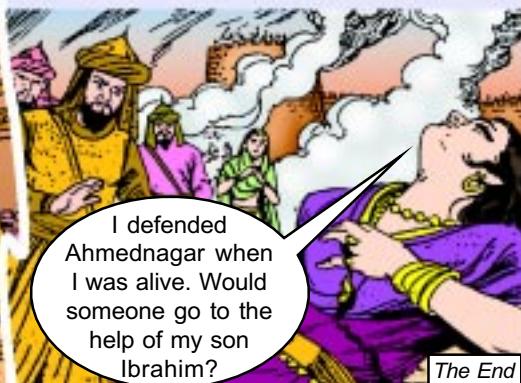
Chand Sultana mobilised men and women, who worked without rest to restore the wall overnight.



The Mughal army was surprised. The fort had no gaping hole. Moreover, their attack was being repulsed. Unfortunately, the fort soon ran out of ammunition.



The Mughals did come back. The Sultana became a victim of their treachery. Even in her dying moments, her anxiety was about Bijapur.



The End

63

March 2002

The Baffling Coincidence

It was one of those fine days of 1882 when a Brazilian gunboat, *Araguary*, was merrily sailing on the sea. Suddenly, one of the crew spotted a strange object toppling over the waves. Soon it was fished out. It was nothing but an old bottle, tightly corked up.

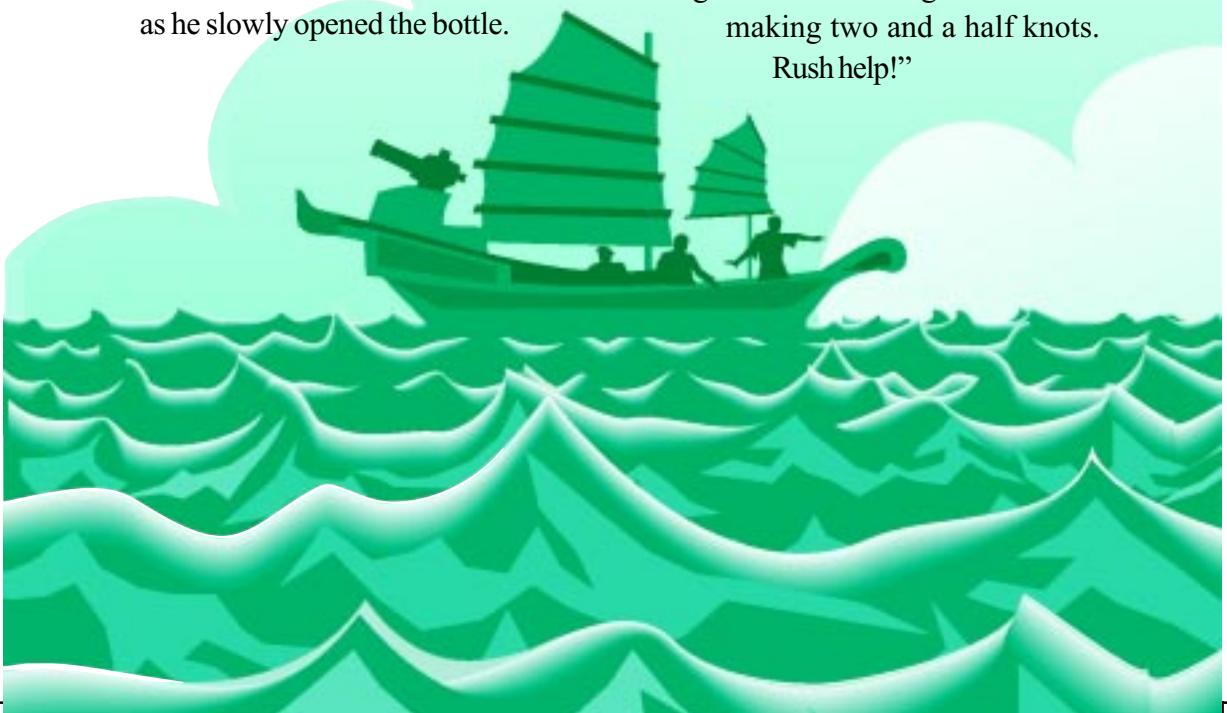
What could this mysterious vial contain?

Standing around the Captain, the sailors looked on with bated breath, as he slowly opened the bottle.

He had to put in much effort, for the container was indeed very securely sealed. At last he pulled out of it an old piece of brittle paper! On it was scribbled a strange message.

“There has been a mutiny aboard the schooner *Sea Hero* by its crew. The captain has been killed and the first mate flung overboard. I’m the second mate and have been spared to navigate the ship. They are forcing me to head for the Amazon River 28 degrees longitude and 22 degrees latitude making two and a half knots.

Rush help!”



This unusual message was undated. But the position specified in it was not very far. So the kind Captain of the Brazilian ship decided to find out whether someone really was in danger. When they reached the spot, indeed they saw in front of them the *Sea Hero* sailing under the control of the mutineers.

A warning shot was at once fired from the gunboat. The mutinied vessel was ordered to come alongside. The Captain's men went aboard the schooner, arrested the mutineers, and rescued the second mate.

Though the second mate was indeed very happy to be saved, he was perplexed how the captain of the gunboat could know about the mutiny.

"But didn't you throw this bottle into the sea with a message in it?" asked the captain holding out the vial.

"I've done no such thing! Nor have I sent any message!" exclaimed the bewildered second mate.

Then where did the bottle come

from? Who wrote the message? It was a mystery that baffled all!

Later, during investigation and the court trial, the enigma further deepened. The schooner *Sea Hero* was named after a novel by John Parminton written 16 years earlier. It seems the author had, as a publicity stunt, put 5,000 bottles, each with a different message, into the sea. It was one of these vials that the gunboat, *Araguay*, stumbled upon 16 years later!

Everybody was stunned and just could not believe it! How could it happen?

Was it just by chance that the day the *Sea Hero* was captured by its own crew that the particular bottle with the message was picked up by the Brazilian vessel? Or was it the work of some higher and unknown powers?





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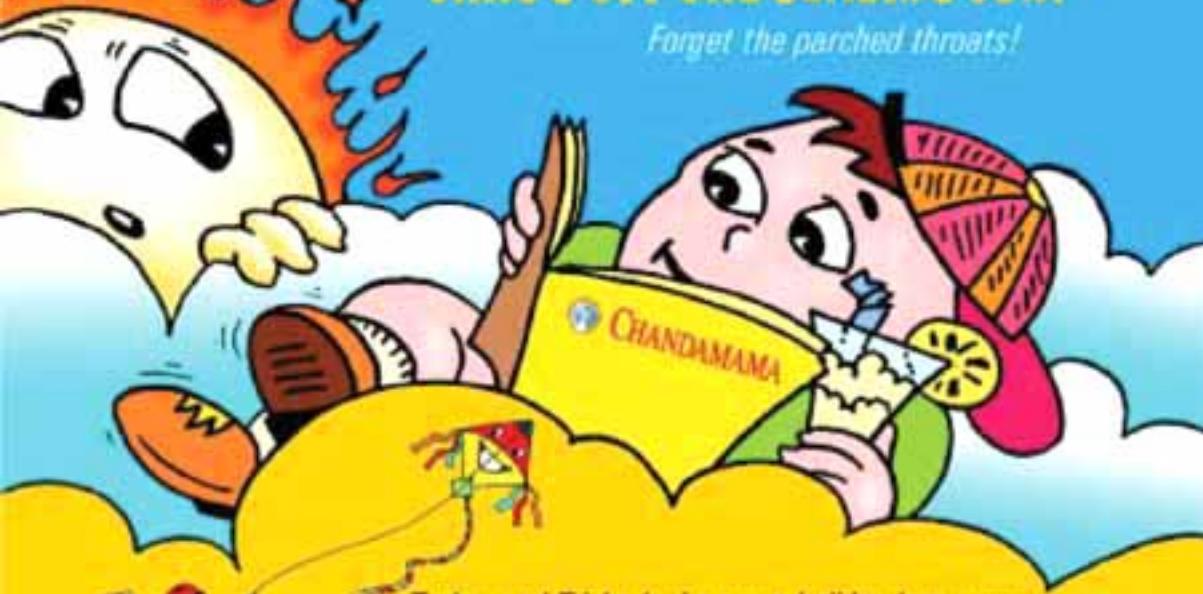
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